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# LAW OF INERTIA

JULY | AUGUST #19

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HAD RELIGION  
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THE (BLEED)  
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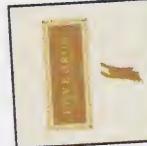
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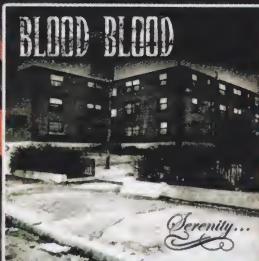
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**LAW OF INERTIA**  
issue #19

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**Thanks:**  
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Website: www.lawofinertia.com  
Law of Inertia ISSN# 1543-7191 is a division of Law of Inertia Productions LLC. Law of Inertia is published bi-monthly out of New York City. All content is © 2004 and may not be reproduced without written permission.  
National and international newsstand distribution through Rider Circulation Services— www.gorcs.com.

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NEWSSTAND DISTRIBUTION

323.344.1200

Subscriptions: (6 issues per year) United States/\$19.95; Canada/\$30; International/\$50; (12 issues per 2 years) United States/\$35; Canada/\$50; International/\$85

Online subscriptions and single issue sales at www.lawofinertia.com.  
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The publisher of Law of Inertia accepts no responsibility for the views of its staff, no matter what they say or how they say it. Even if they say it in Spanish.

# CONTRIBUTORS



SHANE SAYS: "I am a self-glorifying retard. But I look damn good doing it. Somebody's gotta do it. Might as well be me."

## Editor's Missive

### Greetings and Salutations,

Here we are at the beginning of another righteous edition of *Law of Inertia*. We've got a great issue for you, thanks in part to the design mastery of our new art director, Cory Kilduff. So, if you like the new look, he's the one to blame. Unbeknownst to Cory, it's a little bit sad for me to hire an art director. Because I started *Law of Inertia* on a \$400 budget in my dorm room in college, I was forced to teach myself the basics of design, photography, typography, photo editing, etc. Needless to say, as a magazine publisher I always appreciated when magazines were well designed and took chances with their look and feel—I was always more impressed with *Raygun* than *Spin* as a teen in the '90s—and bad design always turned me off. So, when people would tell me that the magazine looked great and was nicely put together, of course I was tickled silly.

Nonetheless, I disagreed with them. I always felt that *Law of Inertia* needed a fresh outlook on its look and feel. Perhaps I needed someone who had actually taken art classes and knew more about design than what he could glean from a few David Carson books and a trip or two to the Guggenheim Museum. After a long and arduous search that took us from the 4th grade classrooms of the Bronx (12 year olds don't charge much for their work. Plus they don't know about 401Ks or health insurance) to upstanding universities with good art departments. We finally settled on Cory because he's a nice guy and because he's the only one willing to stay up until 4 am to get a spread done after I had already made him redo it three times. I'm happy to say Cory fits right in with our little staff. So welcome Cory.

This just proves the point that *Law of Inertia* and so many other independent zines and magazines try to instill in their readers. Specifically, that anyone can start a publication. Plus, just because you run a company that actually makes more than \$20 a year, doesn't mean you have to sell-out or work with faceless, nameless stiffs. Instead, all the members of the *Law of Inertia* staff are trusted friends and confidants. From our lawyer to our art director, all of us are interested in music, culture, and the arts. We love Bruce Springsteen and Black Flag. We love *The Big Lebowski* and hate *Van Helsing*. We are real people who just don't want to work nine-to-five. We hope you appreciate what we do.

Anyway, we worked our asses off on this issue for you and we think it shows. Check it out, send us letters, and subscribe. Until then, may all your endeavors be learning experiences.

Love,  
Ross Siegel  
Editor In Chief



### CORY KILDUFF: Art Director

Cory likes techno more than he likes rock music, but don't hold that against him. Fact is, Cory—known to friends as Coco, for reasons too weird to describe here—likes not only electronic music but he also likes cats. Which is why he always has a pussy nearby when composing tracks for his band, The Rise, or making awesome layouts for all to see. By the way, Cory is much taller in person than he is on stage.



### JOE WILSON: Contributing Writer

Mr. Wilson obviously has a big ego. Instead of emailing us and signing his name as "Joe" or "Joe Wilson," he signs off as "The Joe." I mean, who does he think he is, Donald Trump or something? Regardless, The Joe is worth his weight in gold just like The Donald. His ego, on the other hand, is small and tiny. He is modest, soft-spoken, and kind. So, of course the ladies love him.



### JESSE LOCKS: Contributing Writer

Jesse was so taken by our "Women In Rock" issue that she dedicated her senior thesis to studying women rock journalists. Quite the talented journalist, Jesse's work has been featured in *Heckler*, *Thrasher*, *Arthur*, and her online travel zine *On Tour Magazine*.



### JEFF TERICH: Contributing Writer

Mr. Terich once dressed like Adam Ant for halloween. When he's not busy impersonating The New Romantics, Jeff sings for a band called Cuneyt. We are not exactly sure how to pronounce that. Their shows are usually cancelled because of rowdy drunks in the parking lot. Jeff is also a regular contributor to *Mean Street* and *San Diego City Beat*.



### Jeaneen Lund: Contributing Photographer

Ms. Lund started taking photos of her goth friends at dance clubs during her high school years. The pastime has since become a career, and her photos now feature models in various stages of undress, and shoots which nearly always turn into lavish dance parties. For this issue, she photographed the Deadbeat Dad Task Force in action.



### Raya Duenas: Contributing Writer

Former alcoholic turned assistant agent, Raya Duenas has been sleeping her way to the top of the Hollywood food chain for too long. Too bad she's going to join the Peace Corps, otherwise she'd be the executive producer on the next *Simple Life*, starring William Hung. In the meantime... She bangs! She bangs!



### Shane Gill: Staff Writer

Shane is a great guy. He's introspective, good looking, and sarcastic as hell. All of this adds to his greatness. He's from Queens and he loves hardcore so that's pretty great too. As a matter of fact, if you read the liner notes of the last Boy Sets Fire record, there's a poem that Shane wrote. No shit, he whipped that shit out crazy style and the Boys that set fires liked it, and used it. Great Shane!

## BALL OF DESTRUCTION

Hello, my name is Josh and I am an avid reader of your magazine. I am originally from Toledo, Ohio but attended New York University from 1998 to 2002. In late December of 1999, I was returning to my dormitory after a holiday engagement at a bar called The Thirsty Scholar when several individuals accosted me by surprise. They said crazy stuff in Spanish and blew pot smoke in my face after feeding my suede Hush Puppies to their pit bull. I believe some of the individuals were featured on Page 38 in *Law of Inertia* #18 under the heading Madball. Can you forward me some info on these guys?

Josh, Ohio

Thanks for the letter Josh. So sorry to hear about your recent mishap. Truth be told, this is New York Fuckin' City and bad shit happens in the big rotten apple. If you can't take the heat, get yer ass outta the kitchen. They don't call it New York HARDCORE

for nothin'! Under penalty of a rather unpleasant beatdown, I'm not at liberty to release any more information regarding Madball. However, you can spot various members drinking any night of the week at various hotspots around New York City. With a little luck you and your friends can track them down.

## LESS ANGULAR

I'm sorry to bug you with something so trivial but I was checking out your magazine's web site the other day and I noticed that you have a contributing writer and illustrator named Noel Shankel. I was curious if you would happen to know if this is the same Noel Shankel from *Mad Mad House* on the SciFi network? I realize that this may be top secret, privileged information but it is really driving me crazy (OK, so I'm a little O.C.D. with my pursuit of trivial knowledge) and I am willing to bribe with expensive sushi if necessary. So please, please, \*puhleeeze\* (insert big puppy dog eyes complete with fluttering

lashes here) at least give me a yes or no if you have a chance.

Sincerely,  
Janice

Dear Janice,

You are not the first to confuse our precious contributor Noel Shankel with that no-talent, scum-sucking Hollywood wannabe. More than a handful of people have written in, asking us questions about vampires and witches. We don't know anything about vampires or witches, and neither does Shankel. Here he is, trying to lead a respectable life, and he ends up being confused with a pill popping, scar revealing janitor. If we ever find this other Noel Shankel, we're going to sic our angry drunken giant on his ass.

P.S. Please send a platter of hamachi, uni, mirugai, and some spider rolls to *Law of Inertia* offices for more info.

P.P.S. Who the fuck watches Sci Fi anyway?

## SUNNY DAYS ARE HERE

Thanks so much for covering The Fire Theft in your last issue. Sunny Day Real Estate are the most important indie band of the past ten years and I'm glad to see Jeremy Enigk is out to show the younger guys how it's really done. Jeremy is still hot too!

Jennifer, Santa Monica

Dear Jennifer,

It is indeed great news to see a newly reformed Sunny Day back on the rock circuit and hopefully The Fire Theft will set the music world ablaze (no pun intended) with their debut effort. The Theft not only rock harder than other MTV2 generation bands, but Jeremy also has bluer eyes than that dude from All-American Rejects. Perhaps not being so concerned with his close up and writing memorable rock songs is what makes him so hot, Jen. It is certainly what makes The Fire Theft great.

## STREET BY STREET

I really enjoyed Aaron Lefkove's article on straightedge in issue 18. It's been a while since anyone has talked about the edge in a bigger magazine and I appreciated hearing about bands like Earth Crisis, Most Precious Blood, and Youth of Today. You should consider covering more of the straightedge artists around that keep this fading scene alive.

Quincy, Portland

Dear Quincy,

Thanks for checking out the article Quincy.

Although the punk scene appears to embrace guys in girls' jeans, nifty haircuts, and, all-too-poignant love songs, there are still some hard working bands out there where social-consciousness and ethics are as important as the music that they play. As far as straightedge bands are concerned, look no further than *Law of Inertia* #18. Anti-Flag are a hard-working punk band that bears the X.

## TERROR ALERT

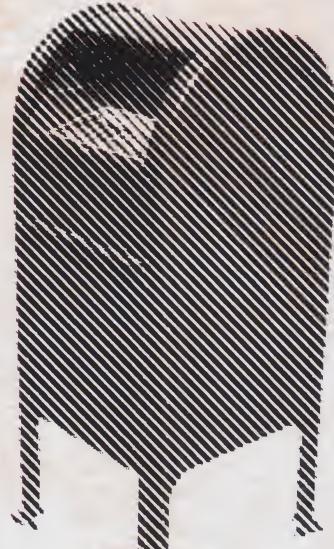
I thought your "Top Ten Favorite Terrorist Groups" article was hilarious. I had a few problems with it though. Canada did, in fact, invade America during a protest in the late '60's, so maybe we should blow their shit up too. Second, you left out Drive-Thru Records as a terrorist organization.

Peter, Washington DC

Woah, woah, Pete,

You can't just go around calling anyone you want a terrorist, man! What's it done for us? We here at *Law of Inertia* are well aware of the Canadian infiltration of our borders into Blaine, Washington on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1970. It was one of only two violations of our "undefended border" act. Nobody was hurt and everyone in Canada has health insurance, so it would have been okay anyway. Wish we could say the same about our own nation. Instead, we quickly racked up a national gun collection that would impress any north African warlord. Canada, look out!

**Please direct all letters to [letters@lawofinertia.com](mailto:letters@lawofinertia.com). Note: all letters, e-mails, or telegrams sent to *Law of Inertia* become property of *Law of Inertia* and can and will be used against you in a court of law.**





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### BEYOND THE EMBRACE "InsectSong"

"this six-man metal army from New Bedford, MA has managed to create a distinct and at time disarming sound. Utilizing no less than three guitarists to compromise their heavy-yet-surprisingly-malleable sound, this unit blends thrash, dark metal and hard-core influences into a seamless and surprisingly satisfying whole...this one rocks from first note to last." *Hit Parader*



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# SIGN OF THE TIMES

## IAN CHRISTIE ON HEAVY METAL

What are the major differences between heavy metal in 1984, 1994, and 2004?

In 1984 the metal scene was inspired, but in 1994 it was jaded. In 2004, metal is devoted; all the stupid reasons are over, and you can tell the survivors and new blood are in it for the long haul.

Is metal more vital today than it was 20 years ago?

There are more duds than ever before, but the visionary bands like Enslaved, Khanate, and Ephemera Duath are pushing heaviness far beyond what anyone in the '80s could have imagined. Take your pick: glam hags Cinderella or Orphaned Land, a modern-day Israeli band who had themselves declared insane so they could play music instead of joining the army.

Who do you see as bands that are carrying the torch of Black Sabbath today?

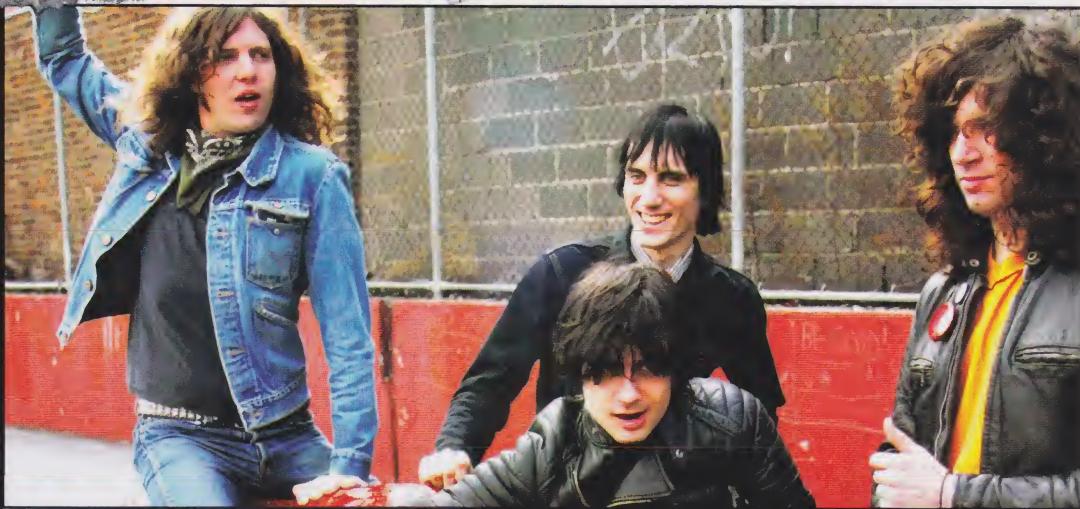
A lot of bands pay tribute by imitating the Sabbath sound, but as far as being brilliantly honest, powerful, and consistently unpredictable, I'd have to say Converge. They transcend all categories—the same way Sabbath did.

Is Gene Simmons of Kiss really as big an asshole as he lets on or is it all an act?

I spent an afternoon with him and Paul Stanley while writing the book. Have you seen the Kiss coffin? It functions as a beer cooler while you're still alive. I'm serious. How can you trust someone who wants to sell you a coffin?



Ian Christie is author of *Sound of the Beast: The Complete Headbanging History of Heavy Metal* (HarperCollins)



## STURF WARS >> SOME ACTION

**LOCATION:** New York Fuckin' City!

**MEMBERS:** Ian McGee (vocals), Ethan Campbell (guitar), John Gatland (bass), Zac Shaw (drums)

**RELEASES:** *Some Action* EP (Gigantic)

**INFLUENCES:** The Heartbreakers, The Undertones, Dead Boys, The Stooges.

**THE GOODS:** Their motto is, "New York is dead! Let's make some action!" And it's true, although their other motto is "Four guys, two haircuts." With the style police hailing every band with a *The* before their name as an instant success, and fashion reigning over substance in the New York City underground rock scene, it's refreshing to see a band who are taking the spirit of punk back to where it rightfully belongs.

Shortly after forming, Some Action took New York City stages by force, leaving a trail of broken bottles, broken microphone stands, and broken noses in their wake. Banned from many NYC clubs and on an alcohol-induced bender, Some Action's reputation soon began to precede them. Frontman Ian McGee has a nasty habit of being physically ejected from more than a few of the places they play due to his over-the-top on-stage antics. It is not unlikely to find McGee swinging from the chandeliers while howling like a banshee or getting up close and

personal with a less than enthusiastic audience. Whatever the case, Some Action shows are always a spectacle.

Bills with local faves The Star Spangles, The Witnesses, The Black Lips, as well as punk legends The Weirdos, garnered the band acclaim from the likes of their rowdy drunken friends and the hipster elite they despise. After cutting a demo with Ramones producer Daniel Rey, Gigantic Music issued a five-song EP that was fast and crude—it adequately displayed the frantic energy with which this band plays. Because of this energy the band sells out shows around New York City and is starting to generate a strong buzz in other garage-rock communities around the nation. Plans are in the works for a full length.

At the end of the day, they may not have the commercial appeal of The Strokes, or the polished sound of The Vines, hell, they don't even have a *The* in their band name. But, they have attitude. When punk is as predictable as a sorority girl in a GAP sweatshirt and as dangerous as baby kitten, there are still those fucked up kids that don't fit in anywhere. They don't care about impressing you. They don't care about making it big. They don't care about the latest white-belt-skinny-tie-wearing trust-fund-stars. They are Some Action and they rock harder than a marble quarry! [AL]

## ALL THE NEWS THAT'LL FIT

Travis Barker of Blink-182 joins the ranks of artists who own record labels. His new imprint of Atlantic Records, La Salle Records, will release albums by Transplants and The Kinison... The Dillinger Escape Plan have begun recording their next full length, entitled *Miss Machine*. Look for a July 20th release on Relapse... The great Orange County,

CA hardcore outfit, Taken, are no more. The band decided to call it quits in the wake of a new EP on Goodlife. No news as to the fate of the release... Volcom Entertainment is excited to announce they will be teaming up with Epitaph to release the new Guttermouth album. Long live un-politically correct punk rock.... Despite rumors of an imminent breakup, Bane are scheduled to record a new full length for Equal Vision... Jason Gleason and Brandon Swanson, formerly of Further Seems Forever, have started a new and as yet unnamed band. Dashboard Confessional

### SCENE POINTS: FUN FACTS TO IMPRESS YOUR FRIENDS

watch out! Meanwhile, Further Seems Forever have enlisted the vocal stylings of Jonathan Bunch, formerly of Sense Field... Vinnie from The Movielife has a new band called I Am The Avalanche... Dead To Fall is recording a new record at New Jersey studio Trax East with Eric Rachel (God Forbid, Hatebreed, Every Time I Die) called *Villainy And Virtue*... Terror has left Bridge Nine and officially agreed to release their next record on Trustkill. The band will release their debut full length, *One With The Underdogs*, in August....

CHRIS CARRABBA OF DASHBOARD CONFESSIONAL AND MATT FOX OF SHAI HULUD ONCE PLAYED IN A BAND TOGETHER CALLED THE-SHIT KICKERS.

Ian McKaye is working on a new project called The Evens while Fugazi is on hiatus. McKaye has also started a new imprint of Dischord called Northern Liberties... Taking Back Sunday will release their next record, entitled *Where You Want To Be* on Victory on July 27th... Fat Mike of NOFX is gearing up for his toughest gig yet, fatherhood. Congratulations to him and his lovely wife Erin... New Wave punks The Epoxies have left Dirlap for Fat Wreck Chords... Justin Brannan of Most Precious Blood is working

on tracks for a dance inspired project called Misery Parade. Sounds like Bauhaus... Austin, TX's The Rise recorded a fantastic new record that will be released in the fall from Ferret Music. Law of Inertia will release it in the states... Lovedrug have signed with The Militia Group, Fearless has signed Yesterdays Rising, Razor & Tie has signed The Chemistry, Drive-Thru has signed Adelphi and Socratic. Has anyone heard of any of these bands?... John Wylie, guitarist of Until The End and president of Eulogy

Records has teamed up with Christopher Brown of Evergreen Terrace and will form Hand Of Hope Records... Island Records has snatched up Fall Out Boy from Fueled By Ramen Records... Midtown has a new record coming out on Columbia Records called *Forget What You Know*... Kung-Fu Records signed Stiff Little Fingers... New York hipster art-dance-punk band Le Tigre have signed to Stummer/Universal and left queer-core label, Mr. Lady, behind... The Ozzfest will kick Warped Tour's ass this year. [xAaronxLefkovex]



DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN

# SHADOWS FADE as i Lay dying

## HIMSA REMEMBERING NEVER

Jul-16 Montreal, QUE Rainbow  
 Jul-17 Toronto, ONT Opera House  
 Jul-18 Albany, NY Glens Falls Civic Center  
 Jul-19 Buffalo, NY Infinity  
 Jul-21 Wilkes-Barre, Wyoming Valley Zoo  
 Jul-22 Springfield, VA Jaxx  
 Jul-23 Elizabethtown, NJ Helfest  
 Jul-24 Norfolk, VA Norva  
 Jul-26 Jacksonville, FL Jackrabbits  
 Jul-27 Ft. Lauderdale, FL Culture Room  
 Jul-28 Tampa, FL State Theatre  
 Jul-29 New Orleans, LA House of Blues  
 Jul-30 Houston, TX Engine Room  
 Jul-31 Austin, TX Back Room

Abilene, TX Desperado's Aug-01  
 Oklahoma City, OK Bricktown Live Aug-03  
 Lubbock, TX, The Pavillion Aug-04  
 Albuquerque, NM Launchpad Aug-05  
 Tuscon, AZ The Rock Aug-06  
 Anaheim, CA House of Blues Aug-08  
 Las Vegas, NV House of Blues Aug-09  
 Grand Junction, CO Mesa Theatre Aug-10  
 Denver, CO Bluebird Theatre Aug-11  
 Omaha, NE Ranch Bowl Aug-12  
 Cedar Rapids, IA Pigstock Aug-13  
 Chicago Heights, IL Oasis One Sixty Aug-14  
 Cleveland, OH Stressfest Scene Pavilion Aug-15  
 Grand Rapids, MI Intersection Aug-16  
 Toledo, OH Headliners Aug-17  
 Syracuse, NY The Lost Aug-19

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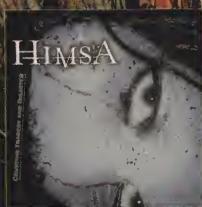


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# CONVERGE FAMILY TREE



## CONVERGE

Converge are one of the last remaining and most influential of the mid-90's northeastern hardcore outfits. They continue to be one of the most brutal and intense metalcore acts in the world. Over the years the band has included members of Bane and Cave-In, and have set new precedents for modern aggressive music. Their landmark album *Jane Doe* is required listening for any hardcore enthusiast.



## KID KILLOWATT

ALBUM: *Guitar Method* (Hydra Head)

ALUM: Kurt Ballou

PICTURE THIS: Along with members of Cave-In, Kid Killowatt steps away from their hardcore tendencies to play melodic rock. Initially released as a very limited edition, *Guitar Method* will see a proper re-release this year through Hydra Head.



## OLD MAN GLOOM

ALBUM: *Seminar III: Zozobra* (Tortuga)

ALUM: Nate Newton

PICTURE THIS: Old Man Gloom creates epic 20 minute songs about the evolution and devolution of apes, monkeys, and other simians. The band also includes Aaron Turner of Isis and Caleb Scofield of Cave-In— which explains their Neurosis-style sound.



## SUPERMACHINER

ALBUM: *Rise of The Great Machine* (Undecided)

ALUM: Jake Bannon, Kurt Ballou

PICTURE THIS: At once minimal, ambient noise followed by cohesive thundering power at others. The two principals of Converge are joined by Seth Bannon and Ryan Parker to bring you a noise rock masterpiece. For fans of Neurosis or Noisegate.

# STATISTICS CONTROL FREAKS AND GEEKS

When listening to the debut full length from Statistics, the brainchild of Omaha, Nebraska native Denver Dalley, one is served a hearty portion of Jimmy Eat World melodies alongside Brand New's pop appeal. Dalley, who plays virtually every instrument on Statistics' Jade Tree LP, *Leave Your Name*, is inspired by a wide variety of influences from the past decade. So, it makes sense that when presented with a list of three musicians who played every instrument on their recordings—Brian Wilson of The Beach Boys, Elliott Smith, and Trent Reznor—Dalley begins to swoon about Reznor's melodramatic histrionics.

"I'd say my all time favorite album is *The Downward Spiral*," Dalley says with awe. "The way Reznor can go from a crunchy, rip-your-head-off thrash part to a piano melody that's as soft as can be in ten seconds is

amazing. It gives you such a rush."

Like Reznor, Dalley prefers the freedom of being able to write all the music and arrange all the songs without the input of three other members. "It's not that I feel other members hold me back, I just like being able to do whatever it is that I want to do without having to compromise to someone else's style. Plus, I'm pretty good at approaching other musicians in Omaha when I need some editing."

Still, Dalley is no stranger to a band atmosphere. He cut his teeth with Saddle Creek stars, Desaparecidos. Although Desaparecidos, or simply Desa, as Dalley refers to them, may have been known merely as the rock side-project of Bright Eyes' Conor Oberst, the truth is that Dalley wrote most of the music for Desaparecidos. "Conor wrote all the words and I wrote most of the music. Of course the other

members of the band had their say, but I was allowed to run wild with what I wanted, which is the only way I could do it." He laughs softly, his southern drawl a congenial characteristic of his persona, and says, "I'm not a control freak. I just know what kind of music I want to play better than anyone else does."

As a matter of fact, Dalley is so calm and relaxed that when hearing his soaring pop rock it's difficult to recall what it's actually like to sit down and talk to him. Dalley doesn't take himself too seriously and one gets the feeling that if Statistics found its way to stardom, which it most likely will, Dalley would still be a guy who pays his electricity bill in his apartment while rolling through Omaha for the night over the course of a ten week tour, and then can't wait to leave home again and get back on the road. [RS]



# THE BACKUP PLAN WHO INSPIRES YOU?

We all wait for that certain chance in our lives to do something special. Some look that opportunity right in the eye and pass it up while others embrace it wholeheartedly.

"I see lots of people who seem unhappy with their station in life but I am grateful to be playing in this band and doing something I love," says Backup Plan guitarist Dan Brenner about the opportunity to play music full time. It's a luxury most aspiring musicians never get to enjoy.

Now that they've taken the gamble to pursue their dream, these Long Islanders are not content to be just another Taking Back Thursday To Ashes rip-off. In regards to the current state of the independent music scene, Brenner says, "I see so many carbon copies of the same three bands all the time. It is very sad to see."

After forming in late 2000, they quickly recorded a full length and split seven-inch. The band then began to spread their infectious blend of

Lifetime-style vocal harmonies with the enthusiasm and vigor of bands like Gorilla Biscuits all over the northeast.

A new imprint called New Day Rising, a spin-off of Punk Core Records, released the band's second record, *Dearest Whomever*. The album incorporates elements of both punk and hardcore; two scenes that seem to grow further and further apart from one another as time goes on. "What it boils down to are the ideals behind the music. It's about how the music inspires you to make yourself a better person," states Brenner about bridging the gap between the two styles. "Hopefully, when you see us live you can tell that we are all playing from the heart. At the end of the day, that's all that matters to me," he elaborates.

As they look forward to a future that includes a full U.S. tour and a possible trip overseas, Brenner says, "What inspires us is that we all love to do this with our whole hearts and to play music that means something." [Ray Harkins]

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# HOT TOPIC



## THE PALE

FROM: Bellingham, WA

ALBUM: *Gravity Gets Things Done* (Sidecho)

PICTURE THIS: Spare pop-rock that fuses equal parts Ben Folds Five and The Beautiful Mistake. This band could easily be found on the more interesting side of the mainstream rock radio dial. Too unique to fit in well with the MTV crowd, too catchy to fit in well with the screamo scene.



## SEX POSITIONS

FROM: Boston, MA

ALBUM: *s/t* (Deathwish Inc.)

PICTURE THIS: These ex-members of The Dedication bring you a record inspired more by bands from San Diego like Unbroken than hardcore bands from Boston like Slapshot. Spastic, quirky, and hard-hitting, Sex Positions are here to fuck you up.



## JUPITER SUNRISE

FROM: Los Angeles, CA

ALBUM: *Under A Killer Blue Sky* (Undecided)

PICTURE THIS: Although they've been described as a descendent of The Rolling Stones and The Who, truth be told Jupiter Sunrise churn out power-pop in the vein of Weezer like none other. Their brand of driving pop is quirky and catchier than the flu. Plus, their singer looks like Frodo Baggins.



## BREAK THE SILENCE

FROM: Chicago, IL

ALBUM: *Near Life Experience* (Hopeless)

PICTURE THIS: Take the chaotic tension of some of the better screamo bands and combine it with a band that would rather cover In Flames than Radiohead, and you've got Break The Silence. Dan Precision, their long-haired metal guitarist was in 88 Fingers Louie.



## EAGLES OF DEATH METAL

PARENTING, POLITICS, AND DEATH METAL

Parenting, politics, and rock and roll: the three could not possibly be more diametrically opposed from one another. Jesse "The Devil" Hughes, frontman for Eagles Of Death Metal, dabbles in a little bit of all three. Before finding a career as a self-proclaimed rock and roll outlaw, Hughes worked in politics as a speech finesse.

Along with friends, Josh Homme of Queens Of The Stone Age, and Tim Vanhamel of the band Millionaire, Hughes crafted an album that is in no way related to death metal. He says, "We are to death metal what The Eagles are to rock and roll. We're not nearly as hard-edged or threatening [as death metal], but what we lack in danger we more than make up for with comedy." The band plays stripped down blues rock with two guitars, drums, and no bass. With song titles like "Whorehoppin' (Shit, Goddamn)" and "Stacks o' Money,"

one can't help but crack a smile before even giving them a listen.

Hughes says of the project: "Josh and I were at a bar with some friends and this dude was playing Poison. I honestly think it was 'Every Rose Has Its Thorn.' This other dude was jumping around saying, 'Dude this is like The Eagles of death metal!' We spent the rest of the night laughing about it and Josh said, 'Dude go write what you think that music would be.'" Hughes went to work writing—songs, not speeches, that is—and soon had a dozen or so tunes to bring back to Josh.

Their debut album, *Peace Love Death Metal*, was recently released on Ipecac Recordings's new imprint, Ant Acid Audio, and Hughes could not be more thrilled. "I won the rock and roll lottery man," he tells me. "After I left politics I was running a chain of video stores; basically I was a glorified video store clerk." Hughes won't say exactly

why he left politics, or even who he worked for, but only that, "I believe in guns. I believe there should be a fully loaded automatic assault rifle in everyone's home, unregistered." Maybe that's where the nickname "The Devil" originates? One can only imagine that our country is better off now that Hughes spends his time making music and not public policy.

A life of partying on the road sounds preferable to politics and customer service, but Jesse also finds time to be a role model to his son. "I've incorporated being a rock and roll outlaw into parenting by allowing my son to purchase his own marijuana now," Hughes says with a laugh. "Seriously, I love being a dad and I actually got married to be a father. My son is my clone; I think he was almost born fully formed out of my head." It's good to see that sex, drugs, and rock and roll are out, and old-fashioned family values are back in style. [AL]

## INSTRUCTION

A NOT-SO SIMPLE PLAN



As Arty Shepherd approaches the age of 30, he knows his days to make it as a musician are numbered. So when one of his bandmates in Errortype:11 proposed going on hiatus, he realized it was time to move on.

"We're not Kiss," says Shepherd. "There's no way we could just go on hiatus." In the weeks that followed, Shepherd and the remaining members of Errortype:11 recruited Quicksand guitarist Tom Capone into the fold, and started writing for a new band. After a four song EP and one self-financed European tour, Instruction was born.

A short time later after the band started to attain a modest buzz, they caught the attention of Geffen records, allowing Shepherd the opportunity to play to audiences across the U.S.—even if some of the gigs were opening up for Puddle Of Mudd.

"I'd rather play for people who have never seen anything like us before," he says. "And believe me, that Puddle crowd

never saw anything like us, and I loved it. With Errortype:11, all the scene kids fucking hated us. They thought we were rock and roll cheese balls. I'd rather be rock and roll cheese balls than a generic, shitty screamo band."

Shepherd can't quite grasp what inspires bands in the emo rock scene to write the "mindless" music they do. As a result, Instruction's music is much more politically minded; criticizing our current president and his war on terrorism.

Shepherd did, however, realize the important role those emo and pop bands play in the music scene. "I told Joel that I thought they were the marijuana of punk rock," Shepard says of his meeting with the Good Charlotte guys. "When he asked what I meant, I said they're a gateway to better bands. I told him to keep wearing shirts of bands he likes, and keep taking good bands on tour because it introduces young kids to better music." Maybe he should have just given them an Instruction shirt. [Matt Neatock]

Welcome to

**CRAZYWORLD**





## TRUSTKILL RECORDS

ONLY THE STRONG SURVIVE

### How did Trustkill start?

It started out as a zine in 1992. I did three issues, and after the second issue, my first record came out. At the time, I was living with my friend Joel Jordan at Syracuse University. His brother Jason, a good friend of mine, ran Watermark Records, responsible for records from Lincoln, Worlds Collide, Flagman—really good stuff in the early '90s. Jason had this idea to do a homeless benefit compilation with a bunch of bands covering the Embrace album (the band on Dischord). He asked me if I wanted to help out because, at the time, I knew all the current hip bands. I got 14 bands together to do this compilation (Lifetime, Farside, Outspoken, Rancid, Undertow, and more) and then he asked me if I wanted to release it with him. My initial response was, "I don't have a label," so Jason said, "Make one." So we made me a logo, and voila, I had a label. This album was called *Land of Greed, World of Need* and was released in the summer of 1994. We ended up raising about \$6,000 for homeless shelters that we divided up between shelters in three different cities.

**Does the name Trustkill have anything to do with the often-violent scene that is rooted in fraternity?**

I came up with the word Trustkill when I was doing a biology lab freshman year of college. It just came to me as I was listening to some lectures on cassette. It is a word that sounds cool and means nothing else, it has no definition, so I kept it.

**At what point did Trustkill become your full-time job? What were the turning points for the label?**

The turning point was definitely the fall of 2001 after I graduated from law school. I had a federal clerkship lined up and was supposed to start that in September after I got married. Life was good. However, I also had this little label going that I had been doing for the last seven years and it was doing pretty well, and I knew that I had the new Poison The Well album coming out early the next year, as well as all my other releases. So, I called my judge and was like, "Dude, I can't do it, I'm gonna run my label instead." He was bummed, but he understood. That was the first time I ever finally focused on the label 100-percent.

**Trustkill only releases six or seven records a year, which is a low number compared to most other labels.**

I prefer to focus on a small number of bands and really push them as hard as possible. A lot of labels I see, their theory is like throwing darts, they sign 20 bands, throw the albums out in the marketplace, and see if one or two stick. We don't do that. I try and get every single band I have to a certain level, otherwise, why did I sign them in the first place? [www.trustkill.com](http://www.trustkill.com)



## PELICAN

### AN UN-METAL BAND

"There's definitely a leather and long hair element at the shows, and there's a lot of indie rock kids that come up and say, 'I usually don't get into this kind of stuff, but I'm into your band,'" says Laurent Lebec, guitarist for Pelican. The band's entirely instrumental sound borrows from several heavy metal sub-genres, but also owes a debt to influences well beyond the world of distorted guitars and muted E-chords. Lebec claims that he takes more cues from what mood he happens to be in at any given moment than from Iron Maiden's back catalog.

"There's no way my music could be anything but a reflection of how I'm living from day to day," he tells me. "It's just a way to share the general happiness that I get out of life, and that's what those songs carry with them." The band definitely sets themselves apart from their

contemporaries with more upbeat and bright sounding songs.

With the release of last year's self-titled EP and debut full length, *Australasia*, both on Hydra Head, Pelican has been likened to both the old and new guard of plodding, atmospheric metal: namely Isis and Neurosis. However, Lebec is quick to point out that there is more to their sound than merely what critics claim.

"It's easier to be considered a metal band when your guitars are loud in concert. I don't think we are a metal band, as much as I am a totally devoted fan of metal," Lebec comments. "The thing that worries me about the metal scene is it tends to pigeon-hole a lot of its bands. It's like, you're a metal band and once you are and it's kind of hard to get out of that. That happens in every scene and it kind of bothers me." The band has avoided at least one of the trappings that has limited the appeal

of some of their contemporaries. They have steered clear of many of the clichés—both lyrically and visually—that are commonly associated with metal bands.

"If there's a concept we're trying to get across, it's that music for the sake of music offers something that everybody can find something different in, and the only thing that we're asking people to do is listen to the record and derive their own personal interpretation of it." With instrumental music, the band can paint a picture for their listeners without really ever pushing a message. For some that's a relief from the political rants that many bands incorporate into their acts. "I find that in the hardcore scene, or even the punk scene, the more you push ideals and ideas and agendas on people, the more you end up defining their own experience for them," Lebec explains. [AL]

## LUCERO

### THANK GOD I'M A COUNTRY BOY!



Shaped by the sounds of alt-country, classic rock, and the more hard edged side of pop, the Memphis band Lucero fits into a genre defined by frontman Ben Nichols as "southern indie rock." Their latest release for Tigerstyle, *That Much Further West*, was one of 2003's sleeper hits and earned the band critical praise and a rabidly devoted fan base. Their reputation as a solid live band has garnered comparisons to The Replacements and Wilco, and their growing army of admirers regularly come out to be part of their inspired live show, singing along to every word.

After forming in 1998, the band showed potential immediately. Though the band has yet to achieve the acclaim they deserve, they have been especially prolific in their mostly under-the-radar career. In addition to their new record, the band has released three stunning full lengths, including two on Madjack Records, and the beautifully sparse recording of *Attic Tapes on Soul Is Cheap Records*.

"Each record is getting more and more the way I want it to be," Nichols says. "I hope that the next record we put out I'll be even more

happy with." That next record will be the often talked about and highly anticipated Lucero/Against Me! split CD to be released on Jade Tree.

Lucero and Against Me! may seem like an mismatched pair, the two are actually quite similar. Both bands are centered around front-men who are true originals. Nichols and Against Me's Tom Gabel both possess a sense of clarity in their lyrics—there are no awkward or vague metaphors, it's just life rolled into lucid poetry.

"Whether it's The Pogues or Bruce Springsteen," explains Nichols, "with all of the songwriters I like the best, there's a definite sense of place." Springsteen has Jersey, The Pogues have Dublin, and Nichols has the rock-history rich town in which rock and roll was born.

Regardless, Lucero have little to do with the hipster elite of New York City as musical descriptions like "angular" or "spastic" simply do not apply. They're just four Memphis boys who love to play rock. Let's hope Lucero can turn this simple recipe for creativity into a lengthy and productive career. [Chris Rager]

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# LEGENDS

## THE BAD BRAINS

Dr. Know of the Bad Brains did for punk and hardcore what Jimi Hendrix did for rock and roll.

You were an integral member of some of the earliest days of punk and hardcore in DC. With you were some now legendary figures.

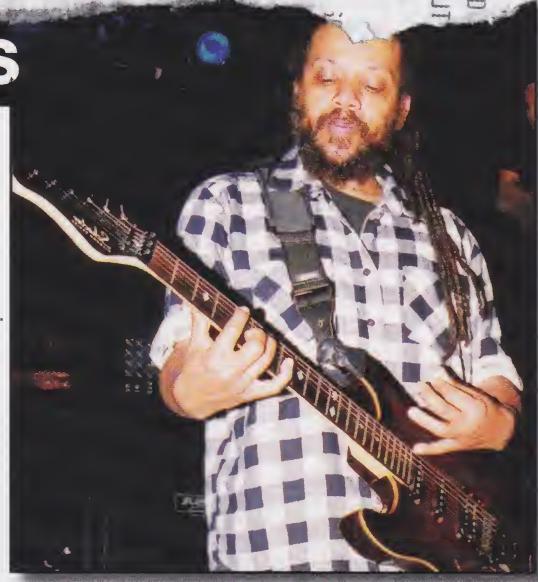
We all go back years. We were always a little older than those guys. I remember Henry Rollins was our first roadie. We had nowhere to rehearse and he was like, "Come over and rehearse in my house." When the Atlantis Club closed there was nowhere to play at all. There was this organization called The Yippies. They had a building and they would have shows. There was a stage in the joint and that was it. Because there was no alcohol or age thing, Henry and Ian [MacKaye] and those guys could come. It was like a party. That's what we did. Not just us but everybody who was in the scene at that time. Maybe six months or a year later all the bands started to come out in DC. Ian and all of those dudes started bands. That was the beginning of the scene in DC. Then the old 9:30 Club opened and the rest is history.

In your early days, the Bad Brains' onstage behavior earned you a reputation for inciting riots, and resulted in the band being banned from most venues in Washington, DC, right?

That's not what we got known for per se or why we got banned. It was just the timing of the music. Nowadays music is commercial and it's sold. Then it wasn't sold. There was no form. There were one or two clubs in New York and those were CBGB's, Max's [Kansas City], and that was it. In DC there was this one club, which is now the 9:30 Club. When we first started that same building was called the Atlantis Club. That was it. Hardcore is a term that kind of derived out of DC from Ian and those boys. They interpreted it as being kind of like what we were doing. It was some different shit. We weren't the only ones banned. It was the music, the scene, and the expression of the youth that was banned. I remember specifically one time we were playing this club that some kid promoted. It was a restaurant downstairs and we were playing upstairs. People were in there, all formal and eating. Back in the day it was the "pogo," so you got 50 kids bouncing up and down at the same time in the same rhythm while in the downstairs at the restaurant they were like, "You got to stop that, the chandeliers are going to shatter." That incident was definitely an influential part of the banning. He would call up the other clubs and it was like, "You can't have their music here. Those guys are inciting riots." You know how it goes.

Were the DC Police bastards back then?

The police were always bastards. You are talking about DC, the most hypocritical city in the world. They've got ten different police forces. You got the governmental stuff, the DC force, the diplomatic police, homeland security police—it's crazy. One time we played in the park in DC. It was a similar set-up to what they do in Washington Square Park



in New York. The police pulled the daggone plug. We are somewhat political, but we call it like we see it. They just see four black people. They would expect it from white kids, but this isn't right. What kind of gang is this, enticing the hood? Sometimes we'd go directly into the hood and play our music just to open up. We would bring a little P.A. and go into the hood. Forget black people not knowing about rock and roll, we would do reggae, they didn't even know about reggae! So we would do our thing. It's deep. Now the new 9:30 Club is in the heart of the ghetto.

You guys also had an integral role in the early Boston and New York scenes, correct?

We moved from DC to New York. We were like screw this. This was before the 9:30 Club opened. The Atlantis had closed and the 9:30 was about to open, but we didn't know that. We were compelled and had to go on this mission. We were like, "We have to go to New York, that's where it's happening." I remember our first gig at CBGB's. It was audition night, which means you don't get paid. This was probably in '79 or '80. We rolled up and we were going to kill it. After we played, Hilly Krystal [CBGB's owner] was like "OK, I want you guys to come back next month and play." I remember we played every day. We played audition nights and we did Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays for six months to a year. We were getting a little buzz at that point in time. This was the time of the changing of the guard, when all of those new wave groups like Blondie and The Cars had gotten major label deals. And here we come, the new jacks, doing what we do. That was the beginning. We were kind of at an early stage with the music. We would jump in a van and go to Philly, Boston, North Carolina, and Florida, and by doing that we got to meet the other bands in all these other cities. Simultaneously at that point we got ourselves established in New York. Because we had a good draw at CBGB's, Hilly gave us two nights to book all the bands: Fridays and Saturdays. We were like the gurus in that respect. There were no labels back then. We did this shit ourselves.

Is it true that Bad Brains gave the Beastie Boys their first show?

It might have been one their first gigs, or if wasn't, it was their first gig where they got exposure. [The Goon]

## HARDWIRED

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### Soviet Calculators Collection

The Site: <http://www.rk86.com/frolov/calcolle.htm>

While our stupid American parents were designing tree houses and forts with slide rules in 1973, Soviet Brother Igor was using the Iskra 123's natural comma and square root features to figure out pi to 18 decimal places. If the Russkies ever hit 20 decimals, Washington DC would have trembled with fear. As we feel secure today from the threat of communism, these machines become pretty cool in a "put them in your recreational room" kind of way. In retrospect, those old cold war fears were a bit unjustified, don't you think? Did we really think the Russians could gain a global positioning on our satellites equipped with some algebraic logic, built-in printing, and an LED display? [Adam Lindenbaum]

### The Gnome Reserve & Wild Flower Garden

The Site: <http://www.gnomereserve.co.uk>

At first glance the Gnome Reserve & Flower Garden looks like a charming, flower-covered English wood. But as you trapse deeper into the misty glen you get the feeling that you're being watched. You start to panic. Eyes are all around you. You spot a little red hat poking out of a hole in a log. Another hat is in a patch of thistle. Three more by the fiddlehead ferns. They're swarming. Gnomes! Garden gnomes everywhere! Over 1,000 of those little buggers (and some pixies) infest the garden's four acres. That kind of population pressure has turned this once peaceful reserve into a foul over populated squatter community. In order to protect the visitors "Gnome hats are loaned free of charge together with fishing rods, so you don't embarrass the gnomes!" And we all know that gnome embarrassment quickly leads to gnome violence. [Tim Holden]

### Dr. Pepper Museum

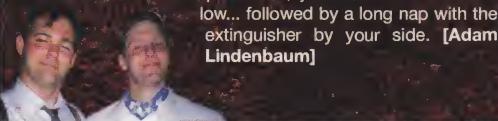
The Site: <http://www.drpeppermuseum.com>

Georgia has Coke, Wisconsin has Pabst, and Tennessee has Jack Daniels, but damnit if Texas doesn't have Dr. Pepper! Like the Alamo and Longhorns football, Dr. Pepper fills a Texan's heart with pride. Born in Waco in 1885, Dr. Pepper has been immortalized with its very own museum. This prestigious institution provides Waco's high-rollers a platinum membership for a mere \$1,000 a year. Normal admission is \$5, so a Platinum member would have to visit the Pepper museum 200 times to break even. Moxie fans aren't even this devoted. The building looks like a mini Alamo and is filled with 18,000 square feet of little more than caps and bottles (made right here in Texas, thank you very much). Downstairs is a working old time soda shop that encourages visitors to "shoot a Waco in the soda fountain." No explanation is given as to what that means. I guess it's common pastime in these parts. [Tim Holden]

### Burnt Food Museum

The Site: <http://www.burntfoodmuseum.com/>

**The Goods:** Now that the Bobby Flays and Mario Batalis of the world are given way too much fanfare for their impeccable grilling style or knowledge of niche cuisines, I prefer to salute the overly zealous at the Burnt Museum Hall of Fame. I mean, why should I settle for a twice baked potato, when I can have a thrice baked potato? Sunkist oranges release many of their natural juices when microwaved on high for 35 minutes (as long as your natural juices are not released along with it). So remember, whenever you get the urge to stir your risotto to perfection, just leave the flame on low... followed by a long nap with the extinguisher by your side. [Adam Lindenbaum]





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It was a Sunday afternoon in 1998 and I was at Deja One, the Long Island catering hall that played host to countless amazing underground hardcore shows. For the few hundred people in the room, that was the center of the universe. On any given Sunday there would be hundreds of kids milling around the streets and at any moment the shy kid you just got introduced to would be doing a kickflip off the stage. Deja One was a place that not only delivered the unexpected, but bred the desire to discover the unexpected within yourself.

It was on that Sunday in 1998 that I first met Daryl Palumbo who sang for a band called The Glassjaw. With black rimmed glasses, a white T-shirt, and a big smile, he looked like a younger Elvis Costello. That is, if Elvis grew up on Long Island and could command a crowd like a general commands an army. Being the cooler-than-thou 18 year-old I was, I pretended not to be impressed with his obvious charisma and shrugged off the conversation with a dismissive "whatever." A few weeks later I saw the same wiry little kid, except this time he was on stage in front of a packed room that was going nuts, singing along to every word his band uttered. People were diving from the stage into the crowd and

piling on top of him to scream into the microphone. There on stage was the angry underdog, both flirtatious and dangerous.

From that initial meeting, I knew the only thing to expect from Palumbo was, of course, the unexpected. Coming from a musical environment that demands spontaneity, and delivers, it shouldn't have been a shock to anyone that Daryl Palumbo has thrown another curveball our way. This time it is in the form of Head Automatica; a group who plays with the ferocity of any band that graced the stages of Deja One. There's one catch: you won't find any breakdowns on this album. Head Automatica mixes up the slickest and most seductive elements of Prince and Sly And The Family Stone. It is the funky, ass-shaking younger brother of disco, rather than hardcore. While Glassjaw may use distorted guitars and screaming to delve into the darker side of life, Head Automatica embraces optimism with its sexy party rock.

The band began as a pet project for Palumbo while in the midst of doing Glassjaw full time. "Hip hop and electronic music is such a big part of my life. It's what gets me up out of bed in the morning," says Palumbo. "It's what I play all day long. So, it seems to me like this record has been a long time

coming."

After writing an album's worth of new songs, he set out to test the waters. "A few years ago, my girlfriend at the time was starting her own clothing line. She was putting a free CD in with the purchase of her bags. So she put one of my first songs under the Head Automatica name on that CD. That was how people first got to hear it," explains Palumbo. "The song was called 'At The Speed Of A Yellow Bullet.' It took off on its own. Next thing I knew some kid uploaded the song onto MP3.com. I didn't expect people to respond so well, they were writing my girl and talking about it all over the internet."

Upon recruiting Dan The Automator as both producer and collaborator, the recording session was in motion and the band's lineup filled out. Head Automatica now features members of Glassjaw, Give Up The Ghost, Lovage, and The Doctor Octagon Band.

"Life affects art and art affects life," Palumbo explains regarding the confusion that may occur from such a radical departure in style. "This album is a period in my life. My music is going to sound a certain way because my life feels a certain way. I'm really happy right now and I think the record reflects that."

Nevertheless, Palumbo refutes any claims that Glassjaw is breaking up. "Glassjaw is not done. We've all been writing, and there aren't any weird feelings between the members. But, we're all busy with other projects right now. I plan on pursuing Head Automatica for the next year and then getting back to work on the next Glassjaw album."

Looking back on those days at Deja One, I think about the room itself more than the sounds that came out of it. It seems that catering hall became a metaphor for the people who left their mark there. It was completely unassuming and anonymous from the outside but what it had to offer on the inside would go on to surpass anyone's wildest expectations. The same can be said for Palumbo and his musical endeavors. Reflecting on where he's been and where he intends on going Palumbo says, "I can say 100-percent without a doubt, that if not for those days in Deja One, I wouldn't be making music now and those are still the most special days to me. That was the center of the world for me and I wouldn't have had it any other way. We were on the next shit then, and I want to stay on the next shit now." Once you witness Head Automatica live, and see Palumbo shake his moneymaker, you will too. □

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# TV ON THE RADIO

ON THE RADIO

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TV ON THE RADIO

When asked what came first: animation, acting, or rock and roll, TV On The Radio's multi-talented lead vocalist, Tunde Adebimpe, doesn't hesitate with his answer.

"Animation definitely. I broke my family's first video camera trying to recreate the California Raisins," he tells me. "I saw them as a kid and freaked out. I've always been drawn to animation. It is easily the most lonely and tedious thing to do; it calms me down. While growing up, it was a good way for me to disappear and not play sports."

Forever changed by the late '80s advertising phenomenon of singing raisins that pushed fruit products with the help of soul and rock and roll music, the shy and awkward Adebimpe moved from Pittsburgh to New York City to study stop motion animation at New York University's film school.

"Liking the energy of the neighborhood," Adebimpe moved into a loft in an old cheesecake factory in the bustling artist-friendly Brooklyn neighborhood of Williamsburg. With an animation studio set up, and a busy schedule that included working on projects like MTV's *Celebrity Deathmatch*, Adebimpe found free time to star in the acclaimed independent film *Jump Tomorrow*. It was during this fertile creative period that he began experimenting with lo-fi *a cappella* home-recordings of himself, mimicking drum beats

and guitar strums. The *OK Calculator* demos of his extremely versatile voice would go on to be the basis for TV On The Radio.

Visual artist David Andrew Sitek, Aaron Hemphill from The Liars, and Brian Chase and Nick Zinner of the Yeah Yeah Yeahs soon became neighbors and were invited over for some late night jam sessions. The result was the impressive *Young Liars* EP, released in 2003 on Touch And Go. The band's diverse background, which includes Adebimpe's interest in Baptist spiritual hymns and Sitek's attraction to art rock and distortion, provided the thickly layered soundscapes that contrasted with the lush vocal harmonies and melodies.

Each song on the EP, including the haunting rendition of The Pixies' "Mr. Grieves," is a journey of the human condition that touches on feelings of alienation, loss, displacement, and love. Ultimately, the songs leave the listener with a familiar feeling; either by melody, instrumental, or lyrical content—but without the confidence to name the origin of the nostalgia.

"Sometimes you have to write that weird, ridiculously catchy song going on in your head," says Adebimpe. "The nice thing about music is, you can aim it towards no one, but with a certain spirit it usually finds and makes its mark. You can only hope that it hits people the same way it hits you."

TV On The Radio made its mark with *Young Liars*, but found their audience with the release of their full length debut *Desperate Youth, Bloodthirsty Babes*.

"The record captures how uncertain we felt. There was a lot of weird worrying and not knowing if the new record was going to stand up to or sound like the EP.

I burnt myself out worrying, but ultimately it isn't up to me to judge," explains Adebimpe.

And judge they did. Music critics hailed the songs as beautiful but over indulgent, falling short of the EP's perfection. Even with the mixed reviews the number of fans has increased. The audience of once predominantly white indie rockers has evolved and grown into a more culturally diverse and varied age group. A recent interview on NPR may be the first indication of a more mainstream crowd taking an interest in the group.

*Desperate Youth, Bloodthirsty Babes* was heavily influenced by new members Kyp Malone on guitars and vocals, Gerard Smith on bass, Jaleel Burton on drums (live and synthetic), and Martin Perna on sax and flute. With their help and the band's unique cross hybridization of rock, Afro-pop, doo-wop, and barbershop harmonies, the music defies all categorization.

"I think everyone in my band is a genius in their own way. No one in the band is doing what he is supposed to be doing. Dave is an amazing painter, Kyp is an excellent draftsman, and Gerard is a talented screen printer, but as a collective we are working out this new language to play with." □



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The music industry can be a very unfriendly place for young and inexperienced musicians. Record labels lure bands in with promises of headlining tours, backstage areas stocked with champagne, and everything else associated with the rock and roll dream. What they deliver sometimes falls one step short of indentured servitude. More than likely labels end up signing a young band that just does not know any better. Ben Jorgensen—the principle member of New Jersey emo band Armor For Sleep—got lucky in the form of a mentor who had made all those mistakes already. His mentor is Gabe Saporta of Midtown.

However, the road to Jorgensen and Armor For Sleep's brush with success is a circuitous one. Prior to forming the band, Jorgensen could be found at most indie rock and punk shows in New Jersey, both big and

small. His sleepy eyes and stunning black hair stood out from the pack of tattooed and pierced nobodies—if he caught your eye once you would never forget him. While in high school, Jorgensen played drums for a band called Random Task, who made a name for themselves in the New Jersey punk scene.

The summer before his freshman year of college, Jorgensen stepped out from behind the drums and started writing his own original songs. Like many talented song-writers, he not only had ample ability on the six-string, but could also sing like an angel. Next, he entered a New Jersey recording studio and put two songs to tape, on which he played every instrument. Shortly thereafter, someone passed a CD along to Saporta, who, immediately seeing promise in Jorgensen's songwriting, took him under his wing, vowing to steer him clear of some of the

mistakes that Midtown made early on in their career. In spite of some of the unwise business decisions Saporta's band made, Jorgensen trusts him. "Gabe knows from experience what not to do," Jorgensen says matter of factly.

Jorgensen enlisted the help of a few close friends around New Jersey. Several lineups came and went, but he eventually solidified the band with Nash Breen, formerly of the Equal Vision band Prevent Falls on drums, and PJ DeCicco and Anthony Dilonno on guitar and bass respectively.

A buzz quickly began to form and for a while it looked like Armor For Sleep would be the next band to hit it big from the New Jersey scene. Soaring melodies and crashing harmonies did not undermine Jorgensen's ethereal voice. Girls swooned and even the staunchest hardcore kids had to admit that the band was on to

advantage of young kids that don't know what they're doing." Thanks to Saporta's wisdom of what not to do the band avoided some potentially hazardous business dealings and they became the newest member of the Equal Vision roster. They have been very happy there ever since.

After signing to the same label that launched the careers of Saves The Day and Coheed & Cambria, the band assumed that success and fame was looming around the corner. Armor For Sleep soon realized that it takes a little more than a hefty marketing budget for a band to achieve success. Hard work and solid songwriting are really all that matters in the music game. After the release of their debut full length, *Dream To Make Believe*, the band has toured almost non-stop to promote themselves and make their dreams come true. They have been on tour with Thursday, Taking Back Sunday, and Piebald to name a few, and they have no plans of letting up anytime soon.

Working hard is a small price to pay for peace of mind and doing what you love. "I remember when we used to tour and I would just expect that absolutely nobody would be singing along," says Jorgensen. "Now, we're at the point where it's just standard to play at a random city and have a bunch of kids know all of our words. I have to stop and realize that it's happening and not take it for granted. I mean we're not selling out coliseums but it's just cool to see that people are catching on." Having seen how long the trip is to the top, Jorgensen and the band are confident that they have made the right decisions, thus avoiding another sad story of a promising young band gone wrong. ■

## ARMOR FOR SLEEP



### industry insiders

something good.

Record labels started offering the band deals that seemed too good to pass up. For a band to go from unheard of to the toast of the music industry in a matter of months isn't rare in the music industry. For the members of the band in question, however, it came as quite a shock. Luckily, Armor For Sleep had the helpful hand of Saporta to guide them.

Saporta went through a similar situation when he was Ben's age. Jorgensen says, "Midtown was 18 years-old when they signed a contract and a lot of times record labels take



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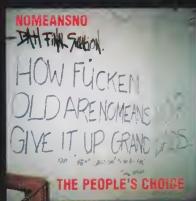


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# THE UNICORNS

The press loves them, their peers love them, and chances are you too may soon succumb to the intoxicatingly sweet melodies of The Unicorns. Since the Montreal trio released their album, *Who Will Cut Our Hair When We're Gone?*, they've been the subject of critical fervor and fan adoration. Opportunity knocked and soon late night talk show appearances and gigs with some of indie rock's bigger names were theirs for the taking.

Perhaps it's the band's melodies that make them both so loveable and admirable. Every Casio-driven song on their album is a fuzzy indie pop gem. They are like a low-budget Canadian version of The Flaming Lips, mixing eerie keyboard riffs with driving disco beats and sickly distorted guitars. Their live shows match their recorded intensity, often involving puppet shows, throwing peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, and crowd participation.

It's hard to imagine how anyone would take umbrage with such a fun-loving, light-hearted band, but in their hometown of Montreal, praise isn't showered upon The Unicorns as frequently as it is elsewhere. "There's a lot of jealousy and envy there," drummer J'aime Tambour says. "No one wants one another to succeed. There's a band called The Dears that spread a lot of rumors and lies about other bands. They've never said anything about us, but they talk really badly about The Stills. And The Stills talk really badly about us. We think all these bands are great and should just get together."

The rivalry between The Unicorns and The Stills may have started earlier—before international notoriety set in—when The Unicorns joked about how their Montreal peers used to be in a tragically un-hip ska band. Though The Unicorns' jokes were merely in good fun, The Stills did not have much of a sense of humor about the quips.

While in Texas, the two bands almost came to blows. But being the non-violent, pacifists that they are, fistcuffs were avoided. "Someone from Montreal—the bass player from The Stills—tried to pick a fight with our manager at SXSW," Tambour says. "But [our manager] was a bigger man about it and didn't start a fight."

Despite the rivalry at home, indie fans south of the border have embraced the band's lo-fi pop aesthetic. Not only has their reception in the States been overwhelmingly positive, but extremely bizarre, as well.

A couple fans wrote homoerotic, pornographic fan fiction about the band and posted it on various message boards, prompting the band to comment on their website that they finally "made it" to the big time. If the big time rock and roll world involves everyone having a different opinion about your band, then The Unicorns are this year's Radiohead.

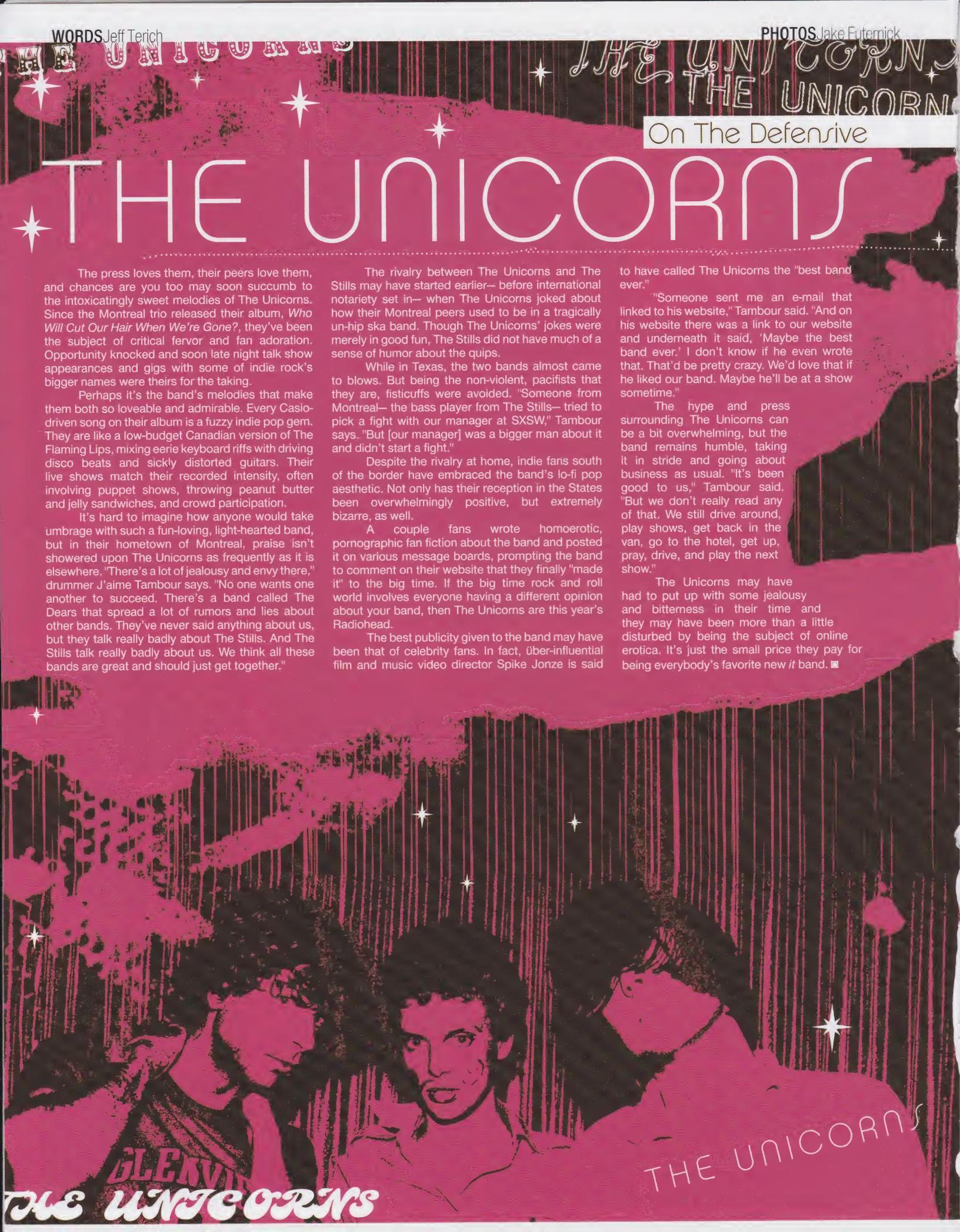
The best publicity given to the band may have been that of celebrity fans. In fact, über-influential film and music video director Spike Jonze is said

to have called The Unicorns the "best band ever."

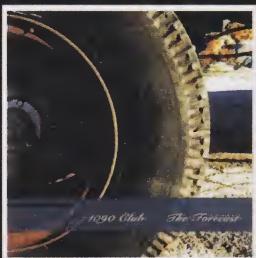
"Someone sent me an e-mail that linked to his website," Tambour said. "And on his website there was a link to our website and underneath it said, 'Maybe the best band ever.' I don't know if he even wrote that. That'd be pretty crazy. We'd love that if he liked our band. Maybe he'll be at a show sometime."

The hype and press surrounding The Unicorns can be a bit overwhelming, but the band remains humble, taking it in stride and going about business as usual. "It's been good to us," Tambour said. "But we don't really read any of that. We still drive around, play shows, get back in the van, go to the hotel, get up, pray, drive, and play the next show."

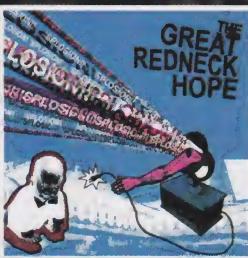
The Unicorns may have had to put up with some jealousy and bitterness in their time and they may have been more than a little disturbed by being the subject of online erotica. It's just the small price they pay for being everybody's favorite new *it* band. ■



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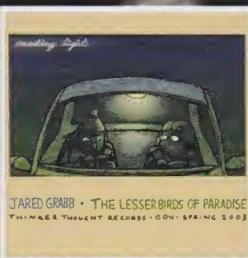
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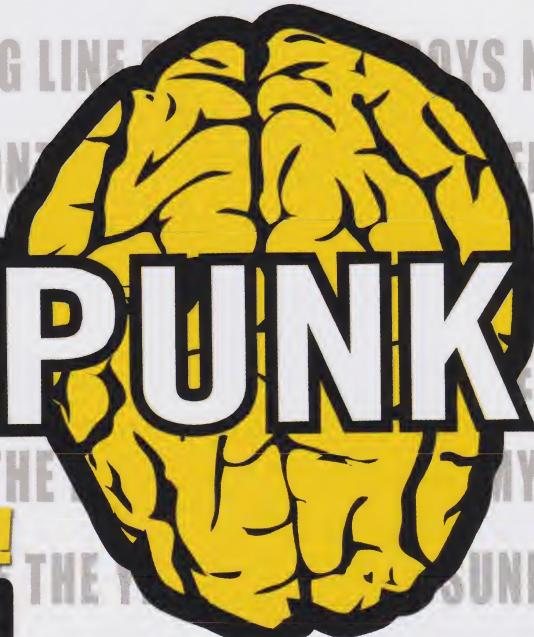
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## ALMOST FAMOUS

Ah, the rock and roll lifestyle. You know how it goes: sex, drugs, and... well... rock and roll. It's life-as-a-theme-park: an endless train of girls, sweat, noise, debauchery, and, um, publicity... lots and lots of publicity.

Folly is a band on the verge, the stage that immediately precedes the rise to the top. Tours with Senses Fail, The Beautiful Mistake, and Moneen came even before the release of their debut album for Triple Crown, *Insanity Later*. Not bad for a band that up until recently was virtually unknown anywhere outside of the Garden State.

I meet up with the band's rhythm section at a dingy bar in Hoboken, NJ. Arbin Colaku and Anthony Wille, who play bass and drums respectively, arrive fashionably late due to the treacherous Jersey traffic. After a stern "You'll never make it in this business with this kind of behavior" lecture, I forgive them for their indiscretions. A round of beers in a dirty rock bar seems to be a perfect setting for the band's first *real* interview.

An interviewer usually gets a "been there, done that" vibe from an interviewee from the get go. "We're very new to this stuff," offers Colaku. "Being interviewed by legitimate magazines as opposed to a friend's little

sister's online journal. A lot of [bands] have a huge phobia about it." I reassure them that the process is mostly painless. I am, after all, paying their tab.

Most workhorse bands have an unofficial spokesperson; the guy who either likes or doesn't mind talking to obnoxious journalists. They've heard all the questions, they know all the answers, and they could do it all in their sleep if need be. That's what makes interviewing a band like Folly such a unique experience. A year from now, these kids will have done this a hundred times. Right now they're slightly off the mark... by about 99.

Colaku, the band's unofficially elected mouthpiece, continues with an anecdote from their CD release party two days earlier at Vintage Vinyl in Fords, NJ.

"We wanted to do an autograph signings" says Colaku. "If there were 20 kids there, we weren't going to bother. If there was 200, we were going to do it."

As it turns out, upwards of 300 friends and fans showed up. "So we were like, okay, we're going to do it, bring out the table and chairs, we're going to sit up there like a bunch of idiots. Two members of the band blatantly refused. We were just waiting for them to come around, and one guy just got up and walked out. He was such a

dick." Talk about being famous before your time.

Yep, fame's a bitch, but the wealth pouring in from their record deal must help ease the pain? "Um, I just had to beg my dad to buy me shorts," Wille laments. "We're all at broke, two of us are border-line homeless," Colaku adds. It warms my heart to buy these guys a round or two. "We're going to have to get used to it." Unfortunately, they are not referring to the free drinks.

And get used to it they will. But if *Insanity Later* is as big a success as the buzz suggests, then they should at least be able to indulge in the occasional pair of shorts. There's something about the album that suggests a kind of overdue progress in the stagnant hardcore genre. While Folly is classifiably hardcore, with screaming and aggression to spare, there are also layers of jazz, classical, and ska (yes, I said ska!).

"My brother [Agim] does most of the writing," Colaku continues, "It starts in his mind. Our singer [Jon Tummillo] writes the lyrics. It all evolves in a practice situation. It becomes more collaborative, but it comes from everything. A lot of it comes from alcohol."

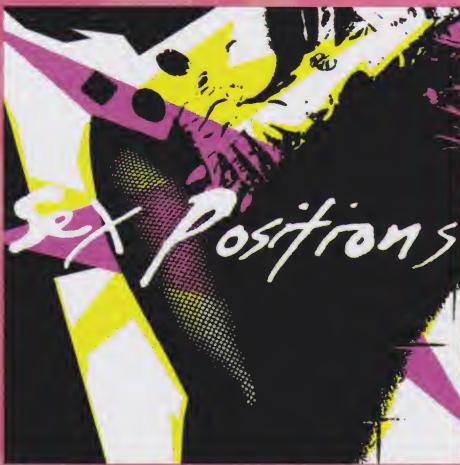
"We all like the same kinds of bands, and we all realized when we were young, around 14, that we were punk kids. We listen to classical sometimes, too, and Nirvana was huge for us."

That inadvertently hits upon what makes Folly so noteworthy. With the age spread of the band between 19 and 22, they represent a new generation of punk. They are the ones inspired not so much by The Clash and Minor Threat as by Nirvana, Green Day, Rancid, and The Toasters. They manage to combine everything at once, and it just so happens are intense. □







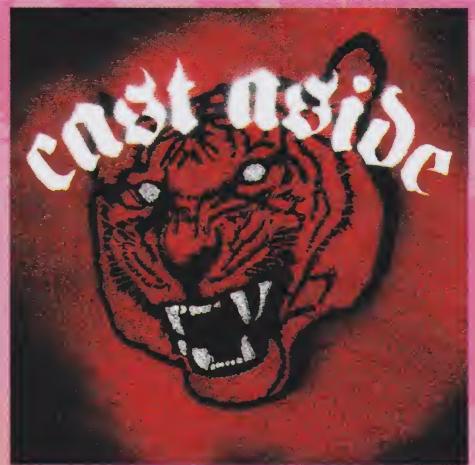


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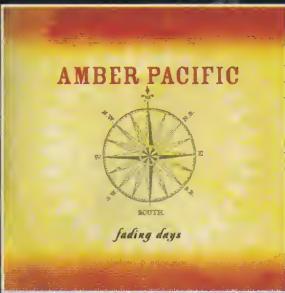
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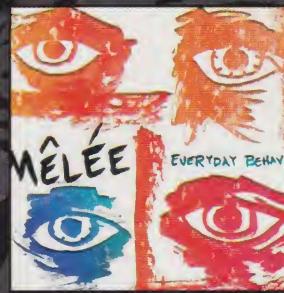
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# BURNT BY THE SUN

## THE SUN WILL NOT GO DOWN

If you ask most bands who they had in mind when they recorded their latest record, more than likely they will tell you that it was all about the fans. When Burnt By The Sun wrote their latest full length, *The Perfect Is The Enemy Of The Good*, they were thinking mostly about themselves. "We were really kind of selfish with this record," says front man, Mike Olander, who also did time in New Jersey hardcore luminaries Endeavor and Nora. "We knew a lot of people were expecting us to keep up with the trends in hardcore, but we didn't want to do that." As always, selfishness has paid off and their second full length release has become one of the most talked about metal albums of last year.

Needless to say, their bone-crushing heaviness has taken years of musical exploration to distill. Burnt By The Sun formed in late 1999 by John Adubato formerly of Black Army Jacket, and speed demon drummer, Dave Witte, of Discordance Axis, in the suburban wonderland of New Jersey. "New Brunswick used to have its own clearly defined music scene," says Olander. "Shows were always going on; Endeavor, Deadguy,

Lifetime, Resurrection. It was quite interesting because you could see any one of those bands on a bill on any given weekend." Any observer can tell you that New Jersey's music has become more commercial as of late. Still, the band feels their home is very important. So, keeping with their Garden State roots, the band's first release on Ferret Music was a split with the now defunct grind outfit, Luddite Clone.

With each subsequent release, including their debut full length, 2002's *Soundtrack To The Personal Revolution*, the band's sound has moved further away from the tech metal that they had perfected to a science. "There are bands out there that are very good and very technical, but I wouldn't buy any of their records," Olander says. "After listening to the record for ten minutes I'll know where they're going with it. We want to be interesting and do our own thing." For BBTS, doing their own thing includes breaking the cardinal rule of metal to play as fast as you can, all of the time. While the songs on the latest record are by no means slow, you don't get the feeling that their goal, unlike so

many other bands, is to get as many notes as possible onto the recording.

One thing that has not changed on *The Perfect Is The Enemy Of The Good* is the politically charged lyricism. Frontman Mike Olander is a known political activist. He serves as executive editor and producer for *The O Report*, a political website and internet radio show. "With most bands, lyrics are an afterthought. We already had laid out what we wanted to say with the record," he says. "We wanted it to be confrontational. These are interesting times and we want to be a part of them."

While their technical adeptness and tongue-in-cheek political commentaries are what set them apart, it's their live show that gets the band noticed in the first place. They played the Relapse Records stage at the 2000 March Metal Meltdown and the label took more than a passing interest. Eventually BBTS landed a spot on the Relapse roster.

Their blend of metal and hardcore is brutal to say the least. Fueled in part by Witte's frantic drumming that looks as if he's beating small children with every snare-

drum hit, the band is a steam engine blowing over anything in its path. Witte's skill is so impressive that it isn't rare to find other musicians, like Time In Malta's Chris Lyon, who are actually jealous of his power. The skinsman even joined Alec Empire to play with his band at the Leeds Festival, and played on Melt Banana's 2001 European tour.

Recently the band brought their live show all the way to Japan. Like many bands that have toured there, they had nothing but good things to say. "It's amazing, you're literally given the red carpet treatment," says Olander, "You're treated as a guest of honor in their country. You feel very much at home there." One would guess there are less 7-Elevens in Japan than in New Brunswick.

While the band is planning on touring a lot more in 2004, they know that there are other things in life besides blast-beats and breakdowns. "We try to be as productive as possible without compromising our careers or our family lives" says Olander. "It's just kind of a shame that none of us are 19 anymore." Luckily, sometimes maturity makes for more refined metal. □



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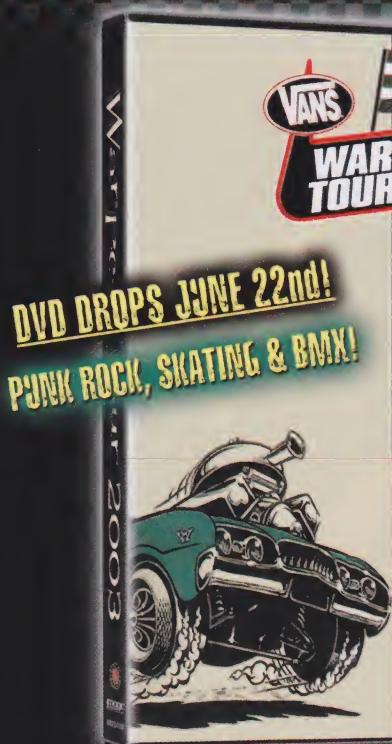
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# UNEARTH

There is a fine line between success and selling out. A band may decide to write music that speaks to them and a select group of fans or they can choose to play trendy, compromised music that appeals to a wider audience. Some bands are lucky enough to find mass acclaim while staying true to their roots and the fans that originally brought them to prominence. One such band is Long Island, NY's *Unearth*. This brutal quintet's sound, which has been road-tested and refined over the last five years, is a massive, bone-crushing cacophony forged from the fires of a northeastern hardcore scene where staying true to the underground is more important than how many kids the band draws at each show.

Their unwavering dedication to the underground has not only earned them a loyal fan base, but also recognition from some of aggressive music's finest acts. They were recently chosen for the opening slot on MTV2's *Headbanger's Ball* Tour, performing alongside *Hatebreed* and *Damageplan*, which features *Vinnie Paul* and *Dimebag Darrell* of *Pantera*.

This tour, their most high profile yet, poses a challenge for *Unearth*. As frontman *Trevor Phipps* says, "Hardcore kids, generally don't want to pay \$25-30 a ticket, so at most, we get between five and 25 kids a show that know who the hell we are. Every night it's just like we are winning our crowd over for the first time." The band revels in this situation, one similar to when they first started gigging around the northeast. Struggling to conquer a largely unfamiliar audience before knocking them off their feet is a dream come true for any band.

When performing on a headlining bill, *Unearth* can usually expect upwards of 300 to 400 kids. On the *Headbanger's Ball* Tour, higher ticket prices, larger

## BRING BACK THE BALL

venues (with barricades) and a 7 pm opening slot add to an already awkward mix. This by no means hinders their insatiable desire to whip the crowd into a sweaty circle pit frenzy. At 7 pm sharp, the band takes the stage and does just that.

From the band's perspective, "It's a complete honor just to be touring with some of the musicians that we grew up admiring." Sharing a stage every night—and sometimes a dressing room—with members of *Pantera* can be a dream come true. *Phipps* claims, "I don't want to be the cheeseball who's like, 'You guys have influenced me forever!' I'm just trying to stay chill." Having watched *Pantera* on the original *Headbanger's Ball* television series, actually talking to the cowboys from hell can be somewhat surreal. However, like many hardcore outfits who only recently left the VFW hall touring circuit, it's easy to forget that many young kids may see *Unearth* in the same manner.

The band is not only enthusiastic to be a part of the *Headbanger's Ball* revival, but also that the program is back in general. "Once *Headbanger's Ball* disappeared," *Phipps* elaborates, "that took away an outlet for millions of people to see what heavy music was." Until recently, it was difficult to find out about a band like *Unearth* in rural locations around the U.S. A show like *Headbanger's Ball* allows kids who may not live in urban locales to discover heavy music.

The second coming of *The Ball* seems

to have returned at a point in time when metal's fusion with the hardcore underground is at a peak. Bands like *Poison The Well* and *Hatebreed* have arrived at the front lines of metal and hardcore because, as *Phipps* is quick to point out, "People don't want to hear that bullshit that gets pumped out like *Limp Bizkit* or *Linkin Park*. I loved *The Monkees* as a kid, but when I was 12 years old I realized that *The Monkees*' music was written by other writers and not actually by the band. That's not music." Perhaps *Fred Durst* would take offense to his band being compared to *The Monkees*. *Phipps* finds it a foregone conclusion.

Longtime fans can rest assured: the band has no plans on changing their sound in order to please the MTV crowd. *Phipps* tells me, "We're not going to change no matter what tour we're on—it doesn't matter if it's *Sick Of It All* or *Ozzy Osbourne*." The fact that *Unearth* recently signed with *Metal Blade Records*, whose back catalog includes *Corrosion Of Conformity*, *D.R.I.*, and *Cannibal Corpse*, should alleviate any worries that fans may have. They are going to stay heavy and remain vital without compromising any artistic visions whatsoever.

The spotlight for band's like *Unearth* should only get brighter if they are able to maintain their convictions. "The reason metal and hardcore is getting back to the level it was at in the late '80's and '90's," *Phipps* tells me, "is that people like real music and don't like that processed bullshit that was promoted for the past decade. I think that's what fuels this whole scene—this is just real music." Long live *Unearth*. □



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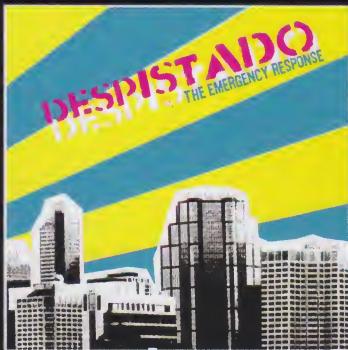
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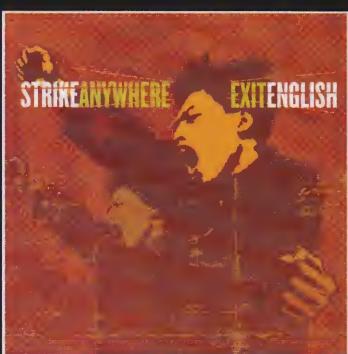
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# DEFENDING YOUR LIFE... YEAH YEAH YEAH YEAHS

This New York City band tore up the underground and promptly embarked on tours with The White Stripes and The Strokes to bring the world a dose of sexy-yet-artsy garage rock. Did their hype, subsequent jump to a major label, and headlining tours all over the world go to their head, or are they the same band now as they were before the fanfare? We talked with guitarist Nicolas Zinner to find out. You be the judge.

Your band tends to lean more towards punk rock than many of the bands you're lumped in with (e.g. The Strokes, The White Stripes, The Rapture, etc.) who are more classic-rock/proto-punk based. Do you find this odd? Are these the bands you consider to be your kindred spirits?

There's very few bands we consider kindred spirits. We're almost uncomfortable with even being a rock band— we just make music and do what we do. We like The Birthday Party and Bjork and ESG and The Locust; people who forge their own path. Because we're doing something relatively stripped down, people like to compare us to other stripped-down acts. We like them and respect what they do, but don't necessarily feel a musical camaraderie with them.

Fabrizio Moretti of The Strokes dates Drew Barrymore, Jack White dates Rene Zellweger— do you guys wish to have any big-name, A-list girlfriends/boyfriends?

Maybe. Wait till Page Six in *The New York Post* reports it.

What are your thoughts on the so-called "electroclash" movement that rose and fell while The Yeah Yeah Yeahs were becoming popular?

I actually think there was rad music being made within that, it just fell into a lot of people's comfortable cynicism, thus being dismissed easily. I'm sure there will be a big revival in three years and it will be "cool." It was just fun outlandish dance music as far as I'm concerned.

Which electroclash bands do you feel are vital?

I think it was more the idea that anyone can get a cheap drum machine and write a song and get on stage that I liked. Ultimately, that turned kinda sour. Like, "Who do they [think] they are, up on stage with that scheizze?"

Did The Yeah Yeah Yeahs ever consider incorporating digital effects into their show? If not, do you have a predilection towards a stripped-down, analog approach?

Yeah, we already are. Mostly samples of things I've already played that I can trigger while in the song. We want things to be bigger, and there's a drum machine / keyboard sound all over our LP.

Singer Karen O was supposed to appear in a *Playboy* pictorial. Why didn't this happen? What were your and Brian's thoughts on this?

We thought she should have done it. She would have gotten mad loot. But, I think Karen was a little uncomfortable at running the

risk of her parents or Korean cousins seeing it.

Karen was also interviewed for the *New York Times Magazine*. Some would argue that once a band is interviewed in the *New York Times Magazine* section (alongside such notables as Hans Blix and Gore Vidal) they have probably lost their underground appeal and street cred in lieu of something bigger and better.

Whatever. We wouldn't have signed with a major label if we were worried about cred. We're worried about making the best music we can make that people can hear and respond too.

Who would win an arm wrestling contest: Meg White or Karen O?

Hmmm, probably Karen, but I think Meg is pretty strong.

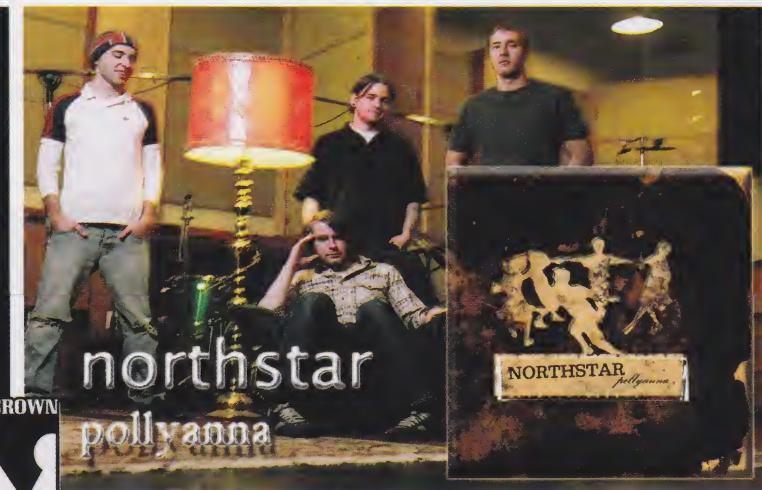
Did you know about bands like The White Stripes lacking a bassist when you formed The Yeah Yeah Yeahs?

No, we didn't. It just sounded good to us that way, and we three got things done very efficiently.

Do you see it as problematic that so many bands these days are jumping on the no-bassist bandwagon?

Um, I don't really care, as long as it's good. There's a lot of people jumping on this neo-harp movement too, but it hasn't been ruined yet. ☐





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# FLASH! FLASH! FLASH! > Bryan Sheffield

by Aaron Lefkove



**Profile:** If you pay attention to underground rock then you've no doubt seen Bryan Sheffield's work. By day he manages Doghouse Records, home to The All-American Rejects, Limbeck, The Honorary Title, and more. In his off time he can be found outside L.A.'s hippest clubs, snapping pictures of rockers like The Bronx and The Explosion. Sheffield's love for photography grew out of his life long love of fine arts. "All throughout middle school and high school I was the art dude. I would go to the art room on my lunch breaks instead of to the cafeteria." Says Sheffield. While studying graphic design at The School of The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Sheffield had a revelation. "I had to take photography classes as part of my pre-requisite courses. I fell in love with it and asked myself, 'Why am I drawing and painting instead of just taking photos?'" Since then Sheffield has accumulated a portfolio of both musical and non-musical collections. "It turned from just documenting what was going on to trying to make a beautiful piece of art."

For more info you can reach Bryan Sheffield at [www.bryansheffield.com](http://www.bryansheffield.com)



## THE EXPLOSION



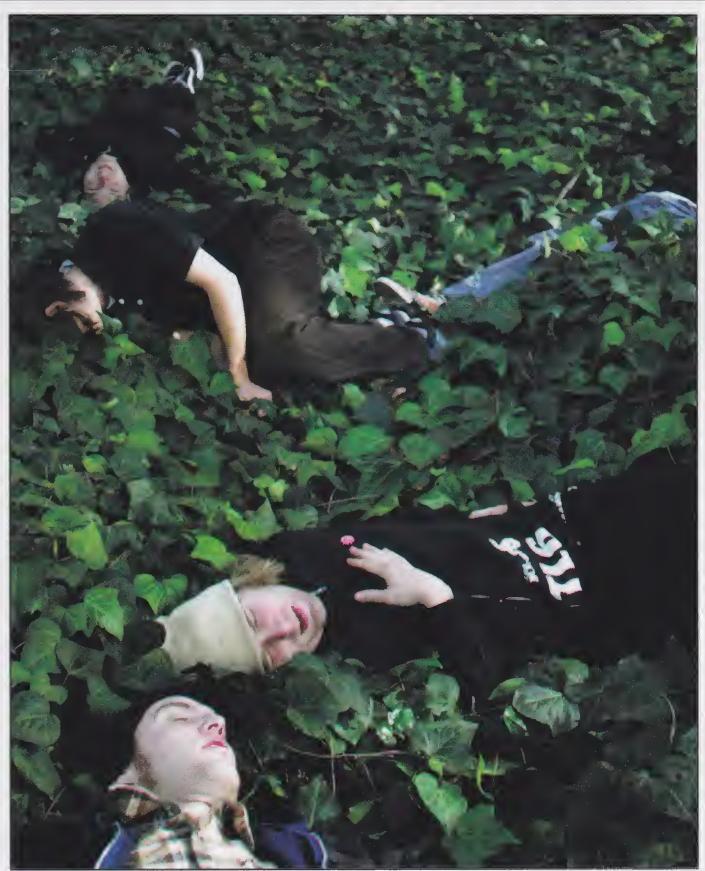
## THE DAMN PERSONALS



## THE BRONX



## AT THE DRIVE-IN



## THE LOT SIX



A purist would say James Munoz looks like anything but the frontman of a hardcore band. His long hair and stylish clothes are the antithesis of the macho, blue-collar image that is typically associated with hardcore and punk. The archetypal hardcore aesthetic of brawny meatheads has faded to the background. Meanwhile, Munoz and his band, The Bled, have become one of the best loved acts of the genre almost overnight and created quite a stir in the scene. While they may not look the part of a stereotypical band fusing punk and metal, The Bled have found themselves on the forefront of underground hard rock.

Critics have heralded this Tucson, Arizona act as the leader of a pack of bands acerbically dubbed "fashioncore." The Bled, on the other hand, would rather be known for their explosive metalcore than their dashing good looks. "It can be hard to fit into this fucking scene," Munoz says. "When people think of hardcore bands, they already have this idea of what every one of them should sound like, or look like. We're just trying to

be something different. Not pissed off tough guys putting out CDs with burning buildings or a bunch of skulls on the cover."

After releasing their debut album, *Pass The Flask*, on Fiddler Records in the summer of 2003, The Bled began performing on tours with Midtown, Poison The Well, and Avenged Sevenfold. It didn't take long for a strong buzz to grow. Here were five guys that no one had heard of, who had just put out a CD with intensely creative packaging, playing chaotic metalcore like that of other bands who find themselves in regular rotation on Fuse and MTV2. After achieving some notoriety the band proceeded to blow people away, and sometimes injure themselves in the process. At a recent show at The Knitting Factory in New York City, the band banged their heads so hard in time to each snare-drum hit, the crowd wouldn't have been the least bit surprised if one of the guitarists' heads popped off and rolled right into the waiting throng of the mosh pit. Fortunately, it didn't, and the band converted another 300 fans in the span of 25 minutes.

Needless to say, The Bled weren't always as adept as they are today. Three years before Munoz joined the band, the rest of The Bled—guitarists Jeremy Talley and Ross Ott, bassist Mike Celi, and drummer Mike Pedicone—were sitting in school joking with each other about starting a shock rock band. According to Munoz, they had dabbled in a variety of different bands, but always loved to sit around and talk about future projects. "One day somebody was talking about this idea called The Bled," he says. "They would all take blood capsules and spit all over the place, while wearing hospital scrubs and having fake child deliveries. It was going to be the ugliest metal ever." One year later, their concept was realized when the band officially formed with Adam Goss on vocals. Though they may have had intentions of starting an ugly band, today The Bled are anything but that. "I guess the sex appeal could be there," he says of his band's image. "But I don't think we're very intimidating in that way. We could be hated and assaulted by meatheads, or the nerdy kid can like us and feel cool."

After recording the *His First Crush* EP, the band began playing small shows around Arizona, quickly becoming heroes at Tucson's family-owned, do-it-yourself venue, Skrappy's. The club gave underground bands a decent place to play, but unless they became a cover band, living on a steady diet of local bar rock, The Bled knew the Tucson scene would not be enough to make a career out of their music.

A lackluster social life was even further incentive for a change of scenery. "We used to basically hang out all night playing Nintendo and drinking excessively," Munoz says of life in his hometown. "Then we'd go blow all our money gambling all night at the Indian reservation casino. It was funny at the time, but the real goal was to get a solid band down, and just do what we wanted to do. And to do that we definitely had to leave Tucson." After becoming a monthly fixture at Skrappy's, the band became friends with the Texas hardcore unit Recover, and embarked on several mini tours up and down the west coast. From then on their comet took off.



When it came time to record *Pass The Flask* in 2003, Goss left the band, and asked Munoz to try out for his spot. "Since we were all good friends, and I knew most of the songs, he thought I'd be a good fit," Munoz says. "He didn't want some guy off the street taking his place. We recorded the album, and have been touring ever since." The Bled turned heads shortly after the album's release on a two-week stint with Stretch Arm Strong. Although previous tours with A Static Lullaby and various festival gigs gave the band broader exposure before their record's release, the tour with Stretch was more meaningful. Finally, kids were showing up just to see them play. According to Munoz, the feedback they gave the band was tremendous. "Tons of people came to those shows," he says. "We played very well, and made a lot of fans. It may have been just a short tour, but it had us playing for more kids than ever before." Those tours paid off handsomely for the band and they fast became a hot item among hardcore enthusiasts.

Munoz realized that the band's good looks and trendy clothes would only get them so far in the music business this year when they had to turn down a spot on the Ozzfest. "It's a heartbreaking story," he says. "Basically, every band has to pay a \$70,000 fee. We don't have that kind of money. The guy in charge of the band roster liked us, and gave us a week to try to raise the money," Munoz tells me. "We did all this crazy stuff like asking for a dollar donation on the web site from any kid that gave a shit. We just couldn't get the money on time. So, Ozzfest 2005 look out for us. We'll be on the main stage."

It's a bold claim for an underground band to make, but not one that is not so far-fetched. With Every Time I Die and Killswitch Engage already signed on for the tour—as well as heavyweights like Slayer, Slipknot, and a reunited Judas Priest—Munoz is certain Ozzfest would be just another good time that could turn an entirely new audience on to The Bled. He jokes that he would even try to make the band more appealing to fans of the tour.

"We'd look like hell for them," he says. "We'd all get orange clown masks and gnarly dreads." Munoz says he could use that big stage to do something Ozzfest would never forget. "There needs to be some dancing on stage," he says with a laugh. "In 2005, we will have all black male dancers that are really obese, and they're going to be wearing nothing but pasties, bikini briefs, and big hats. That would be badass. That would blow minds." Maybe, at the very least it would separate the band even more from the glut of good looking hard-rockers currently gracing stages across the nation.

Metal is definitely the band's specialty, but Munoz has ambitions for the future that go beyond aggressive music. While his roots in hardcore range from a love of Coalesce and Cave In, Munoz admits he's a big fan of bands of other styles, like Joan Of Arc, Radiohead, and Basement Jaxx. "Ideally we would rather be like The Beatles, and write ten million different

## who's laughing now?

songs and show this progression that you could see, but never predict," says Munoz. Those ambitions, to mix up their music and try new things, combined with their active imagination, could have some unintended consequences. "Some people might expect us to put out another heavy album," he says, "But, I want to throw them for some loops. I want to have backwards guitars and fucked up crazy effects. And I want Ross to be on shrooms all the time, writing fucked up shit. There's going to be techno beats. There's going to be battle rapping in the background that you can't hear unless you're listening on headphones." Whatever happens to The Bled in the future, you can bet they will be there on stage, clad in Diesel Jeans and Vans, rocking a crowd into a frenzy, and looking great while doing it. It's no wonder that everyone who witnesses The Bled live comes away with jaws agape. ☐



# EAT YOUR HEART OUT

**Competitive eating is everywhere these days, in newspapers, magazines, and on TV. Rather than watching from afar, Law of Inertia's own **Tim Holden** went on the circuit to rub elbows and bellies with the big names and bodies of the International Federation of Competitive Eating.**

There I was, finally in the big show, backstage at my first major competitive eating event—The J. Freirich Company St. Patrick's Day Competition. Only a few months before I was unaware this world even existed.

The other eaters were quieting down. Some closed their eyes, visualizing success. I had a moment to be alone with my thoughts and try to figure out exactly how I came to be a competitive eater.

I guess you could say my first competitive eating experience was in my 6th grade cafeteria. My peers would time me as I devoured pizza squares in a matter of seconds. According to my friend's Swatch, my best time was six seconds. On those days, I was *the man*. A crowd chanted my name and gave me high fives while I desperately tried to swallow that last god awful square. We created such a stir that the hall monitor grabbed me by the arm and marched me into nurse Dunn's office. I received a stern lecture about the hazards of not chewing my food and was forbidden from competitive eating ever again. Of course, I ignored the advice and since then had limited success at ten-cent wing nights and office holiday parties, but nothing has compared to the thrill I felt back in '89.

It took until this past summer to revive my long dormant career. My girlfriend Liz read a magazine piece about the International Federation of Competitive Eating, the governing body behind all major eating contests, and while she laughed through the entire thing, I listened in stunned silence. I went straight to the IFOCE website where I was shocked to find a link on the site that allowed anyone to register as an eater. All of a sudden, I was on the inside.

The IFOCE is perhaps most famous for the Nathan's 4<sup>th</sup> of July Hot Dog Eating Contest held every year on Surf Avenue in Coney Island. There, 20 competitors showdown at high noon in a hot dog-eating bonanza. For reasons beyond my comprehension, recent contests have been dominated by sub-150 pound Japanese men and women. I had heard of the Nathan's contest, but it was the first annual Turducken.com Thanksgiving Dinner Eating Contest where I first came face to face with eating excellence. The IFOCE had sent an e-mail message to its members to come to the back room of the New York sports bar Mickey Mantle's the day before Thanksgiving. The event was

invitation only, so I could expect to see the country's top eaters in attendance. I got there just as the introductions started. As I expected, most of the eaters were tremendous men. There were committed to the sport of competitive eating and carried their girth well. Towering figures like Ed "Cookie" Jarvis and Eric "Badlands" Booker were in deep concentration. Their size seemed even greater in contrast to a tiny Asian lady standing next to them. I was shocked when she was called to the table and asked to take the center spot among the crowded field of champion eaters. From the start of the contest to the very last bite she held a comfortable lead. George Shea, the frenetic emcee and founder of the IFOCE was in awe of this 105-pound marvel. In 12 minutes this wonderwoman, Sonya Thomas, had eaten nearly 10-percent of her body weight: Eight and a half pounds of Turducken with all the fixings. In case you didn't know, Turducken is a chicken stuffed in side of a duck stuffed in side of a turkey with sausage stuffing in between.

After the turducken contest, I was sold. The camaraderie between the eaters and the shocked expressions from the crowd was wonderful. Six weeks later I signed up for a matzoh ball eating contest. At last, I was going to settle the score with nurse Dunn and once again embrace the world of competitive eating.

The day arrived and I made my way to the bar at Ben's Deli to mingle with the other eaters. Taking a look at the competition, I felt unbeatable, that is, until I walked 420 pounds of defending matzoh ball champion, Eric "Badlands" Booker. Luckily, he was just there for fun—defending champs are guaranteed a spot in the finals and he was very happy to meet a new eater. As the event began he shook my hand. I felt blessed.

The matzoh balls were the size of baseballs, and as cold and slimy as a dead frog. Good thing I was hungry. The whistle sounded and I attacked my balls "English Style" (using a knife instead of my bare hands). I only had two minutes and 50 seconds to set my mark and I was keeping a good pace with my competition, but after four, the cold and sliminess was becoming too much to bear. Furthermore, my knife work was slowing me down. With just a few seconds left I decided to go savage and jam the bastards in my mouth. "Hands



Down!" was called and I found myself half a ball away from winning the round. It took me a week to get over that defeat. I spend hours replaying the event and doubting every strategic move.

Some good did come out of that night, however. My friend Jenny won the Women's Amateur title (3 1/2 Balls), I had the chance to meet my future mentor, Eric "Badlands" Booker, and I got a free dinner.

At the finals, my man Eric blew away the pack with 20 balls in five and a half minutes, his second consecutive win at Ben's. We appeared on an interview for Russian TV that day. Perhaps you saw us?

A few weeks later I got an e-mail from the IFOCE about the first annual Corned Beef and Cabbage Contest at Moran's Irish restaurant on the Tuesday before St. Patrick's Day. I signed up immediately. No wussy semifinals this time. I was to go up against the big boys and was determined to take this as seriously as possible, correcting all the mistakes from last time. I was confident, but completely out of eating shape and without the slightest idea of how to train. I needed a coach and I found one in a big way.

Two weeks before the big event Eric "Badlands" Booker sent me one of the coolest, most uplifting e-mails I've ever received. In it, he gave me a four-point plan to eating success. The first step is capacity. Corned beef is a bulky food so high stomach capacity is a must. Eric told me to drink over a gallon of water a day and stuff myself with cabbage at least once a week. Four pounds of cabbage went down easy and, thanks to Eric's tip, a tablespoon of vinegar in the boiling water cut down on the gas.

Second was strategy. I had to practice eating styles so I'd know how to attack the corned beef once the bell rang. At the matzoh ball contest I wasted too much time with that stupid knife. Intent on not making that mistake again, I bought a corned beef brisket and three cabbages the Thursday before the contest. Jenny, the amateur women's matzoh champion, came over and proceeded to do her best impression of Burgess Meredith's character from *Rocky* (the guy who played Mickey, the old coach with the hearing aid). She stood there and forced me to keep eating until I had downed six pounds of corned beef and cabbage in 25 minutes. While she went home to sleep I sat on my couch, unable to go horizontal for four hours. I got to know that night's meal all too well over the next three days until it finally left my body.

Don't let anyone tell you otherwise, a competitive eater is an athlete. Eating as fast as possible for ten straight minutes can wear you down. That is why the third point of Eric's training regimen is endurance. I needed to do some light cardio and practice my chewing. Being winter, I skipped the gym and proceeded to chew wads of gum for hours a day.

The fourth, and most important step is developing a strong, focused mind. I've never meditated, gone to church, or even held a thought for more than five minutes, but now I was forced to start. I began to see myself finishing plate after plate of corned beef. I thought back to sixth grade. I'd once again high-five everyone in the room, but this time I wouldn't be in trouble, I'd be on the 11 o'clock news.

The night before the event I thought of nothing but victory. Eric's words were repeating in my head. As per his advice, I had my last meal at 6 pm and

proceeded to drink quarts of water to expand my stomach. My concentration was so strong, I needed to drug myself in order to sleep.

As expected, I woke up the next morning more nervous than confident. I tried to shake off my doubts, chugged my last half-gallon of water, and headed off to Moran's.

Just like the Turducken and matzoh contest, there were more press in attendance than fans. George Shea was in his usual carnival outfit and the veteran eaters were all catching up with each other. Hungry Charles was there and it was on his brow where I first witnessed the "meat sweats." Donald "Moses" Lehrman had on his Moses robe with the phrase "World's Fastest Hands" stitched on the back. Ed "Cookie" Jarvis was entertaining the press with his painted trench coat on which every one of his eating records is written. The list is five feet tall.

In his e-mail, Eric said that he'd be in my corner, but there was no sign of him. I figured he had to work his shift as a conductor of the 7 train. Just then a giant figure walked in and proceeded to crush me in his arms. My confidence soared. If Yoda were big, black, and from Brooklyn he would be Eric "Badlands" Booker.

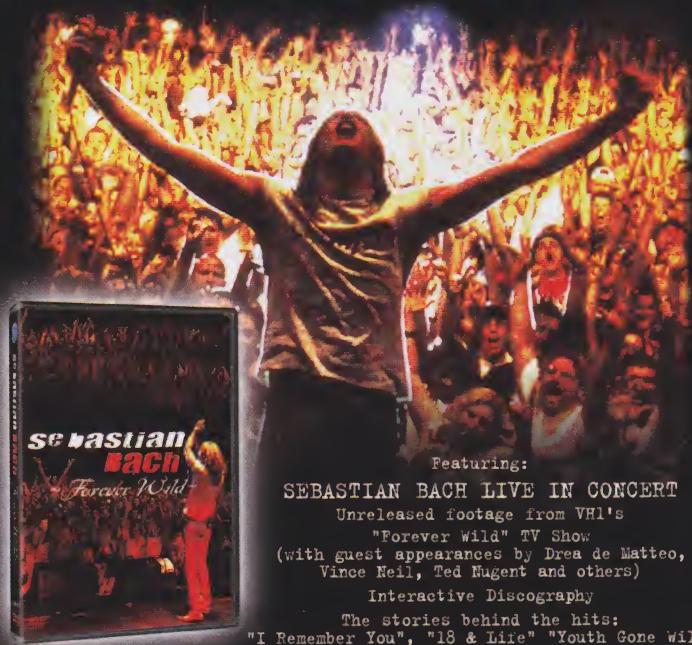
A half an hour before the buzzer George Shea calls us all backstage. He warns us not to eat too fast and tells us the order of our introductions. I would be the first on stage. George also recommends we come on with a game face and fists pumping to help jazz the crowd. Only moments later, Irish music starts blasting and George is giving me a very long introduction, which is odd considering we've never met before. My name's called and I come out like a screaming banshee. I'm locked in the zone. As I was waiting for the buzzer I began to meditate and not think about how badly I had to pee. That half-gallon from the morning needed to get out. As the pre-game introductions continued I closed my eyes and tried to clear my mind. Like I said before, I've never been able to clear my head, but thanks to Badlands, my mind was finally blank. I achieved serenity. All was calm, until an offer of, "Hey man, you need mustard?" pulled me out of meditation. I eagerly adorned my corned beef with Gulden's. Concentration is good, but condiments are a necessity. Forced back into reality, I could do little but stare at the plates. The more I looked, the more intimidated I became. Each one-pound plate was piled four inches high with thinly sliced corned beef. The cabbage was a mere garnish, maybe about ten-percent of the total weight of the plate.

All I remember from the actual event is chewing and trying desperately not to choke on the dry corned beef. Minor stage fright had dried out my mouth and I was hesitant to fill my stomach with any more water. In training I used the cabbage as a water substitute, but here there were only two bites of it per plate. It also didn't help that I wasn't hungry. I ended up being one pound and two bites short of my goal of three one-pound plates. I was visibly distraught afterwards but the camaraderie of the eating vets did a lot to boost my spirits. When I told Hungry Charles and Cookie how disappointed I was, Hungry looked me straight in the eye and said, "Did you have fun?" I said "yes." "Then that's all that fucking matters." A massive hand slapped me on the back and all was right in the world. □

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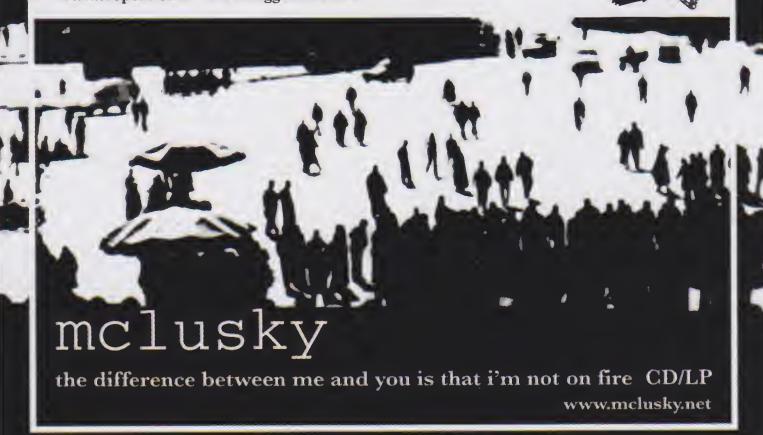
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Music and ideology have gone hand-in-hand since man learned to play his very first note. As a representation of ideals and ideas—be it religion, love, or politics—music has never been, and can never be, truly secular. It's obvious in jazz, classical, hip-hop, and punk. It was especially obvious in the '70's, when punk was strongest and politics were inseparable from the form. Punk rockers were known—in various cases and to varying degrees—for their aggression, anger, and anti-social attitude.

Things have changed since then. Strike Anywhere vocalist Thomas Barnett, frontman of one of the most influential and beloved bands in today's punk scene, embodies that change more than anyone.

When we first spoke, it was four o'clock on a Tuesday afternoon. Five minutes before our interview, I discovered my tape recorder wasn't working. After explaining the situation, I expected to hear frustration on the other end of the line.

"Oh man, I'm sorry to hear that. Do you want to reschedule?" he asks me in a genuinely sympathetic tone.

"Don't worry about it. You can call me anytime this weekend. My wife and I just bought a house in Vermont, so I'm going to be doing some work on it all weekend. You can call me any time." After talking for about half an hour, I realized I should probably hold off until I could actually record the conversation.

The whole debacle makes it abundantly clear that punk rock of today has almost abandoned the needless anti-social attitude and standoffishness of punk rock of yore. Strike Anywhere represents the new political punk. Their latest full length, *Exit English* on Jadetree, includes the song "To The World," which repeats the phrase "I pledge allegiance to the world." Strike Anywhere embrace a punk ethos that finally woke up to the notion that if you want the world to be a better place maybe you should act like a better person.

With technical difficulties now remedied, I finally got the chance to talk to Barnett about life in a punk band, dropping out of high school, the internet, marriage, and Gustav Mahler.



STRIKE ANYWHERE

A NIGHT AT THE OPERA WITH

## IKE ANYWHERE

Let's start from the beginning. I want to know about your childhood and growing up and what got you to where you are now.

My mom grew up in an orphanage in what was once a white working-class ghetto, and is now a black working class ghetto, thanks to desegregation politics. My Dad was from a very poor family. They both managed to go to college—the first in their families to get degrees—and they moved out to a suburb of Richmond, VA. I had a lot of cousins who were older punks. My mom was involved with a lot of social work through her church and I found myself going to a lot of the projects in Richmond's inner city when I was 12 and 13, getting a glimpse of the disparity between rich and poor.

I was also a page in the House of Delegates. I did well in school until about puberty, and I was selected to be a page in the general assembly. You get out of middle school for three months, and I figured out the way the senate and the delegates work. They were all wealthy people, completely connected to the tobacco industry, which runs the politics of Virginia. There was a whole lot of corruption and cynicism. I couldn't find anyone that was an idealist. I couldn't find any issues put on the air that would help the poor. You find yourself looking for something, the feeling that there's something big and wonderful and fair hidden for everyone and you need to find that to give yourself peace.

Anyway, I started skateboarding a lot and going to school less and less. This is what happens to people involved with punk. You become disillusioned and punk saves you, instead of killing you with drugs and alcohol or giving in to the rat race. Instead of an adolescent phase you grow out of, it's more a mantle you grow into.

H.R., from the Bad Brains, had this other band, Human Rights, and the guitarist for that band was my manager at Little Ceasar's Pizza, and I started singing with him, doing Bad Brains covers and straight-up reggae and other kinds of punk rock. Through that I met Matt Sherwood (guitar), my bandmate in Strike Anywhere. He and I shared tapes and stole wood to build

skateboard ramps. Some friends of mine went to jail or died of overdoses, and all these tragedies helped form my love of punk, especially straightedge, though I've never been straightedge.

Years later Matt moved back to town. He'd gotten an electrical engineering degree and he was doing a job working on spy gadgets for the National Security Council and decided it wasn't for him. So we thought about putting an album together, and we met Matt Smith, the other guitarist, he had a lot of drive and discipline, and he helped us find a rhythm section.

You're kind of unique, being a political punk and having worked in politics.

Yeah, it was just as a child, but I saw a lot of it unfold, for sure, but probably what informed me the most was social work, doing Food Not Bombs, and a lot of protest. I was one of maybe 50 punks in Richmond and we would have punk meetings to see if we could even agree on an agenda. The meetings took place on a massive three-story monument to Robert E. Lee. The person who wanted to speak the most would climb highest on the statue, shouting down. Seeing a lot of my friends fall off the deep end, shouting the darkness of punk rock, and a lot of friends embrace the positive side, becoming social workers and lawyers, helping those in need, that inspired me.

You seem like a particularly thoughtful, intelligent, articulate person, and yet you dropped out of high school.

My high school was set up like *Pretty in Pink*. There were the stoners and burnouts and punks and skinheads, and then the other 80-percent of the school came from very elite communities: the football players, the cheerleaders. I don't think you find much of that anymore. I think it was something Hollywood invented to talk about the '80s, but it was pretty close to that in my high school. Anyway, a lot different things were coming up. The principal at the time was embezzeling money out of special education, art education, and honors academics, and putting it into the football team. So I was hell bent on exposing this. It was enraged, and some of my favorite teachers left. There was also a lot of violence happening—between the punk kids with mohawks who just couldn't control

their emotions or gay kids who couldn't come out—between them and the rest of the school. We just got so tired of being picked on, harassed, or ignored, and we finally staged a protest at a pep rally. We held up some signs that said "fascist jocks," and I know this sounds so much like a movie that I can't believe I lived it—it ended up as a riot. A lot of the responsibility came down to me for whatever reason, and I was suspended. There were all kind of around the dynamic of the class struggle. These were a lot of that was just too much for me, so leaving school was the only option. So I started writing, reading, going to night classes, and singing in punk bands.

So, you had more of a complete melt-down of your school rather than just you dropping out?

Yeah, and the principal got exposed and was asked to resign, and later on he became the superintendent of Virginia Beach public schools, and I felt like everybody would just be screwed.

You're married. How has your relationship played out in relation to your band and success and touring?

Well, it's a pretty unorthodox marriage. We've been together for years, been great friends. She's a consummate student, and right now she's getting a masters degree in environmental advocacy, hoping to go to law school. She's very supportive of all the bands I've done, and what we do as a culture what punk rock is. She helped put on shows in Olympia, WA, back in the '90s. It's extremely tiring, sometimes, trying to juggle it all with living in the mountains and living with a bunch of animals. We've done a lot of animal rescue stuff and animal rights activism. She tries to cover a lot of the animal rights stuff, and I cover a lot of the human rights stuff. But she's taught me so much about how to be alive and be a better vegan on the road

and so on.

Being on the road so much must be strenuous on the relationship.

We've been really good friends for five times as long as we've been married, and the marriage was really a good excuse to party and get together with friends. But part of marriage is respecting each other's independence and respecting what we can give to the world.

You're obviously very socially active. How important is the music to the equation? Do you think your music makes a real difference?

I think figuring out who you are as a punk band, in terms of exacting social change, is not the best way to spend your energy. You can go back and forth about the music or the message, but I think at a certain point it's about personal catharsis and sharing that in this space, in this show, where there are emotions in the air and a belief and a kind of unity and this energy. Whatever one does with that is not the band's job to direct, because after a while punk can turn into a cult of personality or a cult of ideology, and punk is bigger than those things. I think just having something for everyone to feel good

for a moment and to give people the courage to stand up for what they believe in, then the individual will be able to make choices that will help his family or her community. I think it has to start with what's personal about punk.

You've talked in the past about the internet and how it has affected your career. What kinds of things has the band experienced in relation to the internet?

In our case, it's done some really interesting things. Kids in areas where we didn't have distribution—like Malaysia and Taiwan and Australia—when we went over there, they had all heard it, because they downloaded. Kids in Russia are getting in touch with me about doing a cassette release, because cassettes in Russia are more wide-spread than CDs. People seem to want to pass our music along and help us, and they can do it with the internet. Some people are just into it because it's free, so they'll just listen to us, and then they'll go to the show and tell us that. But having a new avenue for people to get into the physical part of it, the spending time with us part, is really important. And if that can start with something as ethereal and temporary as the internet, then it must be really powerful. It aligns so much with punk's ideology: survival of

the free-est, survival of the fairest. It's also great for networking activists across the world. When we update our web site we'll have a lot of links to counterculture and activist groups.

What keeps you musically inspired now? I find that punk rockers, more than any other classification of rocker, have notably eclectic music tastes.

I like folk, the whole band's into Billy Bragg. I listen to a lot of cheesy, but not too cheesy, R&B and electronic music. I'm really into Seal and Massive Attack. Also opera, and every now again I will be playing opera in the house.

That makes a lot of sense. I grew up on classical music, I used to play the cello.

I'm staring at my wife's cello right now, as we speak.

The interesting thing is I hear a lot of mainstream musicians talk about Gustav Mahler being a big inspiration. It makes sense, how people like Mahler and a genre like opera are such big influences on hardcore.

I know! I don't know if hardcore knows it or not, but it's going there, with these long instrumental folk openings to the Tragedy records for example. The Montreal punks, like Godspeed You! Black Emperor, it's all about Mahler. And you know what the first classical tape I bought (that I didn't take from my parent's record collection) was? *The Resurrection Symphony*. I'm not kidding, I still have it, and I listen to it twice a year, and it just tears you apart it's so good. I can't believe you brought that up, and I can't believe other people have brought that up. What a great connection. I just find it funny that there would be hardcore bands that don't believe they're influenced by opera. The whole form is hugely theatrical and operatic.

Right, and I think there's something else about hardcore, too. It's a direct lightning bolt right out of the blues, and what the blues is influenced by, which is the black spirituals. Seeing this art form, what they did with the very theatrical and participatory art form in the churches, all that democracy and all that screaming at the preacher and the hand clapping, all that energy... I see a hardcore show, and I'm like, God, the great great grandfather of the blues, which is the grandfather of rock and roll, one of rock and roll's distressed and distorted children is having the same genetic expression as generations back. Now punk could never live up to that, but I see it as hopeful, that at its most righteous and cathartic, that it could possibly be a metaphor with that. ■

By now, almost everyone in America under 30 knows Bad Religion. While they once whiled away their days in the southern California punk scene, they have since achieved widespread appeal through four major label albums. That period in the band's lengthy history had them part ways with one of their two main song-writers, Brett Gurewitz, and the Epitaph Records he founded to release the majority of the band's catalog, win spots on MTV's buzz bin, find mainstream radio airplay, and garner acclaim from rock and roll fans the world over. During the past few years they gathered a total of six members, including a reunited writing team of Gurewitz and singer Greg Graffin, two stellar records on Epitaph, and a resumption of their world wide assault on the international rock and roll touring network. Their new record, *The Empire Strikes First* is their most specific

small, intimate setting of a dingy club than the superficial setting of ballrooms.

This past spring I had a chance to sit down with Bad Religion's impressively articulate frontman, Greg Graffin for a chat. If you've seen more than one photo of Graffin, you know he is not good looking in the traditional sense. Rather, he is intense, bold, courageous, and confident. When you see him on stage he presents exactly the same focus as in photos. In person he is something else entirely. Congenial to a fault, Graffin talks more like professor than a punk rock star. When he told me his father teaches at the University of Wisconsin, where he grew up, I was not the least bit surprised. However, when he told me he is an enormous Green Bay Packers fan and actually has a Cheesehead hat, I was a bit shocked. Here is a brief transcript of what we talked about.

**Does evolutionary biology contribute to Bad Religion's subject matter in any way?**

Ross, it contributes in every way. I mean, the name of our band is in many ways a response to what I've learned about the subject and in my studies over the past 25 years. Most people don't realize that evolution means way more than just how did a few amoebas millions of years ago change from plants to monkeys to people. Evolution affects how people think, how the brain develops, how cultures are formed, how people live and how they act— it affects every single thing that makes us people. From there you can see how racial and anthropological lines are drawn, and thus how our society operates. Ross, one in five Bad Religion songs has something to do with biology. Even our first album, *How Could Hell Be Any Worse*, which had a picture of Hollywood on the cover... that

## Evolving and Revolving with

# Bad Religion

and focused work to date. It will surely bring about another wave of fans to this long-standing punk powerhouse.

Anyone interested in rock music over the past decade should be aware of these facts. What they may not know is how interesting the members of Bad Religion are. All of them are prolific musicians with superb punk rock pedigrees: guitarist Brian Baker was a founding member of both Minor Threat and Dag Nasty, other guitarist Greg Hetson did time in the seminal SoCal punk band The Circle Jerks, co-writers Greg Hetson and Brett Gurewitz, both founding Bad Religion members, have been in numerous side projects including Error and American Lesion respectively.

By far the most interesting member of the band is frontman Greg Graffin. Graffin, who formed Bad Religion in 1980 at the tender age of 15, is hardly your typical rockstar persona. Although he looks self-confident to a fault, even imposing in promotional photos of the band, in person Graffin is a laid back, almost nerdy individual. When listening to a Bad Religion album, his intense delivery does nothing to prepare an interviewer for his sheer wit and intelligence— those big words he uses on their records may seem like an act. They're not. He really is that smart.

Rumors of Graffin having two advanced degrees— a master's in geology from UCLA and a PhD from Cornell University in evolutionary biology— are true. Graffin is more than just a highly adept musician. He is also a parent. His two children are raised in a bi-costal manner— half the year in California, and half the year in Ithaca, NY, where Cornell is located.

As a Cornell graduate myself, I used to see Graffin around town, too intimidated to approach him. Nonetheless, I was first in line for an impromptu show at a very tiny venue in town called The Haunt a few years back. The band had been recording at Ithaca's only nationally recognized institution other than Cornell, Pyramid Sound, where others like Earth Crisis had tracked albums. While on stage at a fairly packed club, the band joked around with the crowd, clearly more familiar with a

We started this magazine in Ithaca, Greg. Oh, that's great. The great thing about this town is that it is so diverse and such a haven for people who don't quite fit in. Maybe it's because the entire town revolves around education and young people, but it's very easy to find a wide range of cultures here. I've only realized how strong the punk scene in this town is recently.

**When did you move to Ithaca?**

A few years back to pursue my PhD at Cornell. I just finished it in evolutionary biology. I did a master's degree at UCLA in geology which I finished in the early '90's, and as soon as I had some time I moved right back to academia, which I do in addition to my musical habits. I have my kids here, I have friends, and I have a studio, so it's great here. I think my band mates took a while in understanding why I live here most of the year as opposed to California where they are, but they know me and they know why I'm here.

I actually took a course in evolutionary biology at Cornell with a famous evolutionist named Will Provine.

Cool! He was my advisor, and he's a close friend. He's an amazing guy. As I'm sure you know he had a brain tumor, which hasn't returned in a few years. He's an amazing guy and I learned so much from him. He made me consider learning in such a different way.

You know, when I found out you had two advanced degrees— something most full time musicians aren't interested in, much less have time to do— I told my dad who muttered something about yours being a waste of an education. What do you think? Well, if anyone is interested in Bad Religion's subject matter... in the philosophical and emotional topics presented in our 150-odd songs, then I'd say a perfect place to start to find answers to my questions would be in academia and learning. I take what I've learned in school out into a wider context, and from there I'm able to derive ideas and instances that form the basis of songs.

title was a philosophical question. I was only 16 when I asked that question, but it was because my teacher in high school motivated me to think about things that would later become life long explorations for me.

**You can tell that even with your old logo with the crossed out cross you were doing something different than your contemporaries like The Adolescents or The Circle Jerks.**

My dad is a professor and I always knew that I loved music since a very young age. But, I never bought into the rockstar fashion of living your life in the stereotypical celebrity way. I guess the way I exuded my anti-rockstar muscle was making my band about something more than the same type of things rock and roll bands were singing about in the early '80's. I started studying evolutionary biology when I was in high school. One of the songs we did on that first record was called "We're Only Gonna Die." [sic] It ended up being a pretty famous song because Sublime did it on one of their albums. That was sort of the beginning of my questions about genetics and human behavior and how we are programmed for destruction. I went on to write many, many songs about that topic. On the new album I sort of steered away from evolution for once, but it's such an interesting topic because there's so many places you can go with it as far as the main idea of a song.

**Greg, here you are talking about evolutionary biology, which is a pretty heady subject. You're clearly a strong intellect and anyone who has listened to any of your records knows what a large vocabulary you have. I wonder if people ever feel if you're trying to force your knowledge upon people— trying to throw as many three-syllable words or intellectual ideas into each song as you can. Do you see yourself as trying to promote learning and intellectual exploration in your music?**

Well, to the first part of the question, that can be a valid criticism. In certain parts of my history I've been guilty of that. However,

my history I've been guilty of that. However, that was very early on. I think the 1990's, and now the 2000's, have been a progressive refinement— as any writer who takes themselves seriously refines their craft— myself and my co-writer, Brett, have both taken it very seriously to communicate as directly as possible. And, never will you find that more than if you read through the lyrics on this album. To answer your other question, when I'm on stage I don't feel like I'm a member of the punk scene, I feel like I'm a motivator of the punk scene in the same way that a professor who's up on the lectern is speaking to an audience that is much younger than him— I'm 39, professors are much older. There's a huge gap in their experience levels, but the professor doesn't feel weird talking to the audience, there's a tacit understanding that these people are there to learn something. So yeah, I take it very seriously that I have something important to say; that our songs are not the most basic rock and roll topics. I think that music can be a force for social change. I get that from music too— bands that were around when I was developing as a musician— bands like The Germs, The Adolescents, Sham 69, The Ramones, The Buzzcocks, and Elvis Costello of course. In many of those cases those bands have gone extinct kind of, they don't exist in people's minds anymore.

Has anyone ever criticized you of preaching? Do people think you're talking down to them?

[laughter] Man, if I look for it, there's criticism in every corner. Anybody who puts their neck on the line and advocates anything in public is open to ridicule from the little people. I'm sure there's plenty of criticism. If you take it a step further and put your neck on the line then you're putting yourself in the line of fire even more! I don't read the gossip columns, I don't even read reviews. I figure that if you're privileged enough to have people talking about your art, then that's a good thing and I don't have an interest to hear what they're saying honestly. I have the self-confidence— hopefully not arrogance— to think that I'm saying something of value. My lyrics are based on actual study and not just whimsical ideas. Therefore, it's not a joke. It's not easy to write me off.

Have you ever thought about giving up music and becoming an actual teacher?

I've thought about it, but I get more satisfaction from music.

Probably pays better too.

[Laughter] Yes, that's true, but that's a secondary motivation for staying in music. This main thing is that this feels more free. I feel

really strained and confined in the academic world.

Have you ever read *White Noise* by Don DeLillo? A lot of the same themes you discuss in your songs show up in that book. Yeah, he's a Bad Religion fan. I have a signed book by him that says, "To Greg Graffin, a true talent." It's one of my favorite autographs.

I would think he'd be too old to be a Bad Religion fan.

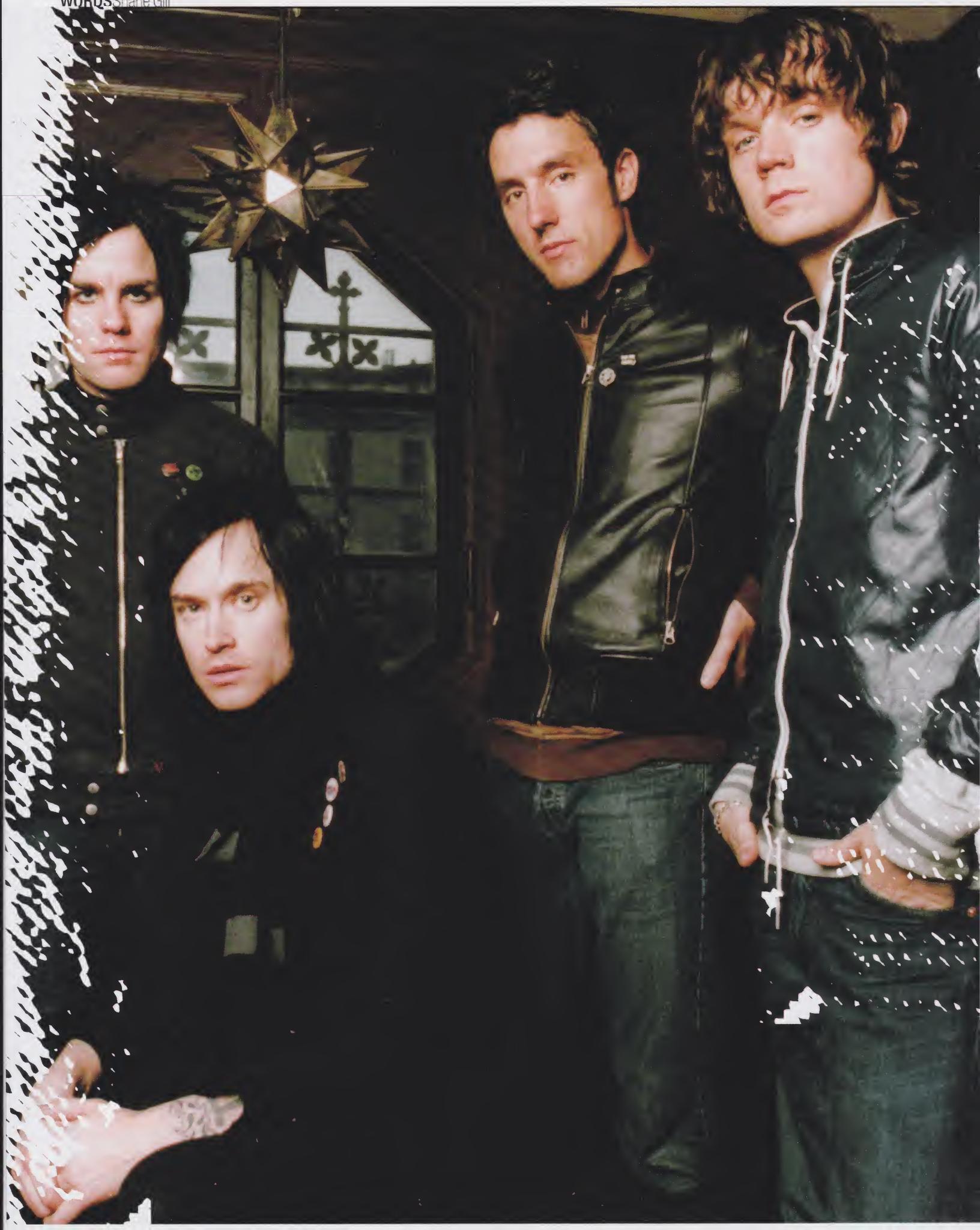
You'd be surprised. It's not just punk kids who are our fans. I discovered the book long after Bad Religion started, but anyone interested in our band should definitely check out that book. As a matter of fact, my dad teaches that book at Wisconsin.

So, what's next? Not academia, but music for the indefinite future?

Well, I think a lot of people expect me to go further in the educational world. I have my PhD so now people expect me to raise the bar even further. For me that's improving upon our last album, *Process of Belief*. Our new record is the best thing we've ever done, I think, so now I'm going to devote all my energies to proving that to the world and then going back in and topping it again. ☀



WORDS Shane Gill



Rising from the flames of discontent that was the great progressive hardcore unit, Refused, The (International) Noise Conspiracy has spent the past five years as one of the most vital punk rock bands on the planet. Instead of painting by the numbers with stereotypical slogans and punk sing-a-longs, they've been combining the communal quality of dance music with an intellectual left-wing political slant. What other band would mention both the Situationist Movement and The Rolling Stones as equal influences?

After releasing three full length albums and a slew of EPs, they've spent the past year working on their new album, *Armed Love*, with Rick Rubin. *Armed Love* will be released on American Recordings this summer, where they will sit alongside labelmates like Johnny Cash and System Of A Down. How did a socialist punk rock band from Sweden wind up on a major label run by a Buddhist and named after the country that brought you G.W. Bush? Good question! Vocalist, Dennis Lyxzen sat down with us to discuss all things international, noisy, and conspiring.

# The (International) Noise Conspiracy

## ...Under A Communist Moon

**Why did you go from playing violent and technical hardcore to stripping it all down and playing in a rock and roll band?**

When we did the last Refused record, the only thing I was listening to was soul music and garage rock. You can tell my influences on that record by everything that is punk about it, and after the last Refused record I realized I needed to take a few steps backwards in order to go forward. If I was going to continue with the political ideals of Refused, then I needed to simplify it and write something that people can sing along and dance to. I was getting really tired, even by 1995, of the tough guy aesthetic in hardcore. I got tired of all the testosterone. I'm not a tough guy. I like to feel music in my hips. I wanted to be in a band that played revolutionary dance music, much more in the vein of James Brown and Fela Kuti, than hardcore. I think we're getting closer to where we wanted to be when we started now with this new record and that's kind of cool.

**Why do you think there are fewer political punk bands today? Considering the fact that these are really fierce political times with Bush in the white house and a resurgent right wing in America?**

The punk rock community will always be the punk rock community and that is based on rebellion and resistance, even though sharp political analysis was never punk rock's forte. I've noticed in Sweden that when times get tougher due to recession or whatever the sales in foreign travel and candy go through the roof. It seems that there are two ways to go, our way which is more radical and active and the other way is escapist. I think that escapist is one of the two ways to go and it seems right now a lot of bands are choosing escapist. It's weird for me to see people from the punk scene do bands that are all about cocaine and girls. It leaves me wondering what the

fuck just happened?

**Do you think it's a coincidence that punk and hardcore bands are choosing escapism at a time when pop culture seems to be forging a marriage with punk? I can't remember the last time punk and all of its concepts have seemed less dangerous.**

Yeah, it's kind of strange. We flew into Texas recently to play South By Southwest and while we were there we went to a local mall to get some food or something and we saw a punk rock store.

**Hot Topic?**

Yeah! It was really confusing, 'cause on one hand it seems like it would be really cool for people to be exposed to this culture, but on the other hand it was so shallow and didn't even scratch the surface. It's like everything in this world. It's just a representation of something that once was, but it gives us a lot of space to be active. It gives us a lot of space to speak in. I don't know if we're even punk anymore.

**Why do you doubt if you're punk?**

Punk rock of today is so much about image and surface these days and I don't think we have that surface anymore. Our music sounds like '70's hard rock. I personally think we're more punk than anyone out there, but I'm sure someone is going to get mad because they have a mohawk and a spider web tattoo on their throat or something. It's also weird to me as well, coming off of Refused, because so many of the bands that claim our last record as an influence were the antithesis of everything that we were about. With Noise Conspiracy we want to go beyond admitting times are tough, we want action, we want answers. All the newer bands sing about how fucked up they feel. There is a lot of anxiety, a lot of angst, but never an explanation.

**That goes back to the fact that political analysis has never been**

**punk rock's forte.**

Yes, but even when I got into punk rock, The Clash and The Dead Kennedys had a powerful social critique. They talked about class. They talked about money. They talked about capitalism and its social and economic structures. But now, all I hear are bands talking about how fucked they feel. Good Charlotte made a noble attempt to write a song that dealt with teenage suicide and teenage suicide is a horrible thing, but if you don't talk about what's driving people to misery then you're shooting off target the whole time. You're missing the point. I think it's really sad, because there is a lot of potential right now. There are a lot of angry kids out there that don't like the way they're living. They don't like the way the world looks. They don't like the way things are, but if all they're offered is this emo metal angst then that's all we're going to get from them. Our music is about dancing and celebrating life, finding hope, strength and empowerment in the people around you, and through that, finding answers and solutions. That's why punk rock finds itself in the mall. What else is a better example of a place that is escapist? A lot of people think that because we're really political and we talk about capitalism that we're really serious, and we are, but we just want to be a positive inspiration for people.

**Where do you think kids should go if they feel moved by The (International) Noise Conspiracy? If they feel moved to act, where do they turn?**

It's really hard. It's very challenging to get organized with people we don't know. It's hard for fans to get organized with us.

**It's also indicative of a larger historical crisis on the left. How do you become organized with the everyday John and Jane? How do you unite all different types of people? How do you get the everyday**

## person engaged?

I think where fans need to go is where they feel like going. There are a lot of ways to express yourself with art, music, and writing. Be part of a local or international political group. Start a band with your friends or do a zine. If you go to a show and like what we're talking about or feel interested in what we're talking about then go home and go to a library. Go to a bookstore and check out writings on a topic that you identify with. We talk about a lot of stuff that concerns us from our perspective, from our point of view, from our background, but it doesn't apply to everyone. We are hoping to create ripples in the water. We say something that gets someone excited, they will say something that excites someone else and so on and so on and maybe we'll all meet at a protest. It's real easy to be cynical. Our whole generation hides behind that. But, I have so many friends who got into politics through Rage Against The Machine. As corny as they may feel about it, that's what happened. I became a vegetarian after listening to *Youth Of Today*. That's how it works, someone says something and the ripples begin in the water.

## How did you hook up with Rick Rubin?

On the first tour we did in 2000 with At The Drive-In and The Murder City Devils we hung out with [the photographer] Glen E. Friedman. After seeing us play he e-mailed Rick Rubin and told him to check us out. Rick Rubin came out to see us with Tom Morello because they were looking for a new singer for Rage Against The Machine.

## Wow, did you try out?

No.

## Would you?

No. [Laughter] So, those guys were at the show. Tom Morello and him really liked the show. We met and then a couple years ago we played Coachella. When I came home from Coachella, I had an e-mail waiting for me from Rick. He asked in the e-mail if he could do our next record, I didn't even need to think about it. I was instantly on board. Right then, we started talking about it and planning it.

## Why was it so instant? Why were you so excited to play with him off the bat?

Four words... Slayer's *Reign In Blood*.

**Did you have any reservations with signing with a major label? Were you concerned that people wouldn't be able to reconcile with the fact that you are a political band with an anarcho-socialist backdrop who is signed to a major label?**

Honestly, no. We were so excited to be working with Rick, and it's a once in a lifetime opportunity. If that's what it takes to work with him, we'll do it. It wasn't about being on a big label or selling a lot of records. It was about working with a guy who can extract something incredible from us. There is nothing outside of the world we live in. You can be as underground as you want and it's still capitalism, it's still the same economic and social system. We were on Epitaph, the only reason Epitaph isn't a major label is because it isn't big enough yet, but it will be one day. It's not about underground versus commercial bands. It's all bigger than that. If your concerns are to keep punk rock on a strictly underground level, then yes, we sold out, no question. But, I'm not interested in keeping punk rock underground. I'm not interested in

keeping these political ideals underground. I'm not interested in being an alternative for the chosen few.

## Was there ever a period in your life where you felt different, where you felt that it was the underground versus the mainstream?

Of course, but that's all part of growing up. I used to criticize Rage Against The Machine in Refused interviews. I like when people criticize us because it keeps us on our toes. It keeps us sharp, but I've been playing punk rock for 15 years and I have bigger things to think about than who is writing me the check. It's all part of the same system in the end.

**I think the disparity there is that people don't look at it as an argument against capitalism. People look at it more narrowly as "us versus them." If you're on a major label you'll be seen by those people as being one of "them."**

Of course. If you read *Maximumrocknroll* then you would hate us, but we don't have anything to do with that, we never did. We don't want to be an alternative for the chosen few. I have friends who are part of that scene, and I respect them, but I disagree with them and they disagree with me. For so many years I was so concerned over who would like my band. I would think that people from the same scene as me should like my band and I used to worry about it, but then I woke up one day and realized that I just want to make good music and talk about these politics. We never said we'd change the world, but hopefully we can get people excited and inspired.

**On your last album, *A New Morning, Changing Weather*, it seemed that the muse of the record was the anti-globalization movement. That record seemed to capture the excitement and possibilities that the movement presented. Now, after the implosion of that, September 11th, and everything else in the world, what is the muse?**

Desperation. It's 9-11, it's the war on Iraq, it's the implosion of the anti-globalization movement. It's the loss of momentum. It's the loss of hope and personal stuff. It's more personal. How does it feel to live in a capitalist system? How do you motivate yourself to struggle? How do people in Palestine get up everyday and keep on living? How does someone in New York who lost a family member on 9-11 get up in the morning and keep on living? A lot of the record deals with desperation and frustration but it's a hopeful record.

**Does it get as personal as some of the solo material you have released with Lost Patrol? Are the personal and political merging more for you?**

Definitely. There are two songs on the record that are very personal in the sense of the last Lost Patrol album. One song in particular is called "The Way I Feel About You." It's a song that can be interpreted in different ways but it's about someone making you so excited that you want them to feel the same thing as you. It's peppered with references to revolution. Another song is still untitled but it will probably be called "Let's Make History." It's about motivating yourself to carry on a political struggle without someone at your side, someone you expected to be there with you.

## What happened in regards to Sarah [Almgren, organist/guitarist] leaving the band?

It didn't work out. That's the bottom line. We were together for 12 years. When we broke up we couldn't be in the same band anymore. It was too hard. Her leaving the band was mutual, it wasn't like anyone got kicked out or quit. No one wanted her to leave. She plays guitar for a Swedish pop star now and is doing okay for herself.

**You're going to be doing The Warped Tour this summer. Whenever a band is political and they enter that world there is a lot of weight on their shoulders. There will be people there that will hate you guys no matter how political you act and then people who will hate you for not being political enough. How are you guys going to come here as Swedes in one of the most politically charged summers of the past decade and express yourselves?**

We haven't figured it out yet. We are thinking about it a lot. It's unfair because it's not up to us. At the end of the day we're just a band. The expectations both pro and con are going to be interesting. We're going to try to bring pamphlets with us, books, and talk as much as we can.

**How do you feel about the upcoming elections? There are obvious worldwide implications.**

I don't think it ultimately matters if Kerry or Bush wins because it will be the same system. It is the illusion of choice. I tip my hat to the Punk Voter community. It's great that they're getting people excited about politics. These are two candidates who represent the same views, come from the same background, talk about the same things, and have only a tiny bit of difference. Being a radical from Sweden, it seems a little weird. As of now I don't believe voting will change anything, but I can't expect everyone to be a crazy radical like me. So, hats off to everyone who is trying to make a change, and yes, please get rid of George Bush. That's the first priority, then let's work on getting rid of Kerry.

**Pop culture has this unbelievable way of swallowing the challenges it's presented with and making the alternative tame and docile. How does a band that is political by nature, presenting alternative views to the society in which they exist, stay vibrant? How does The (International) Noise Conspiracy stay vibrant as a radical alternative?**

I think you have your moments and time. I don't think that vibrancy lasts forever, but there are people who have stayed vibrant for a long time by always moving forward and challenging themselves; people like Ian McKaye. Anytime you stop and become a musical jukebox you're in serious trouble. When you look at the great bands like Led Zeppelin or Black Sabbath, they were so vibrant, but look at the span of when they were vibrant. Five years? Six years? Most bands get two or three years and that's it. That's the world and culture that we're living in, but on the flipside I wouldn't mind if our ideas were everywhere. If our ideas were everywhere then John Kerry wouldn't be the only other option to Bush. Hopefully, we can make our impact, but then it will be the next person's turn to step in and make their impact. We're all just ripples in the puddle. ☐


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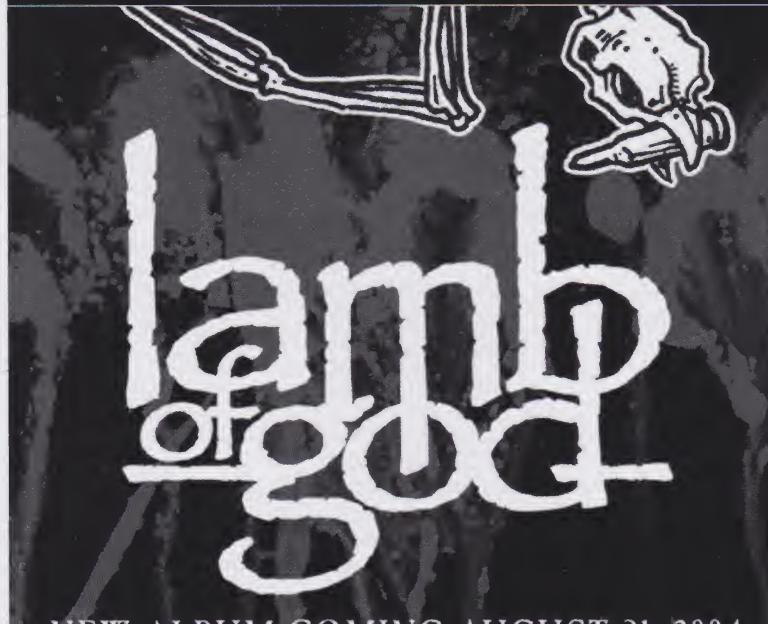
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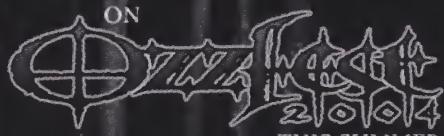


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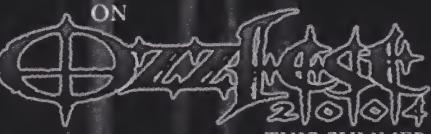
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# AGAINST ME!

There are few moments that are as inspirational and life changing as going to your first punk rock show. Not the kind of punk show that happens in concert halls or ballrooms; the kind of shows that happen in local neighborhoods,



in VFW halls, or friends' basements. For a young person who has never been exposed to a counter-culture movement, seeing many social misfits congregated outside of a local all-ages venue can be a revelation—it can be a pivotal moment in the way one looks at the world. The people at a genuine, underground punk show probably resemble how an alienated 16 year-old feels more than the crowd at an arena show does. It's as if it's the first time he has ever seen people that look like he does, wear the same clothes, listen to the same music, and discuss the same things. Although kids may not go to the show to buck the system, the implicit feeling of dissent is in the air. The moment may be subversive in hindsight, but it doesn't feel subversive at the time.

When Against Me! played at the Pratt Institute, an art school in Brooklyn, NY this past April, the fact that they were on a very established, industry-standard record company and not a bedroom Do-It-Yourself label did not cross anyone's mind. As the first guitar chords clanged through the PA, hundreds of kids pressed up against the stage and the excitement was so palpable that it didn't matter if this was a dingy basement or Madison Square Garden. There were no barriers between the crowd and the band; no distinctions between those rocking out and those getting rocked.

The lack of a barrier, physical or emotional, between a kid at a punk show and the members of the band is what attracts people to the punk scene in the first place. With punk rock being co-opted on every level by the major music conglomerates of the world, moments like these are fewer and farther between. Few bands can combine a distinct street credibility and the ability to attract mass attention like Against Me!

Against Me! was started in the dirty basements and garages of Florida as a one man act by guitarist Tom Gabel. He began his musical career in south Florida, playing in grindcore bands like Common Affliction. In 1997, shortly before Common Affliction broke up he recorded solo demos in his room with his four-track recorder and played a test show to see if he could play live in a solo situation. Around this time, he enlisted the support of drummer Kevin Mahon, who, for lack of a traditional drumset, banged his way through each song on pickle-buckets and makeshift snare drums. Soon, the two-piece set about recording and touring. Many homemade tapes and ill-fated northern jaunts ensued. In 1999 Mahon and Gabel moved from Naples, FL to Gainesville, which remains the band's home base. A rocky beginning soon yielded a full line-up. After playing laundromats and coffeehouses around town he recruited Warren Oakes on drums to replace a departed Mahon, and finally added a second guitarist, James Bowman, and Andrew Seward, on bass in 2000. Against Me! was complete and ready to take on the world.

And that is exactly what they did. "We never had a set plan for the band. When I was playing solo I just thought it was a fun thing to do and I figured I'd just see where it took me. Suddenly I found myself playing with some awesome musicians and incredible people and we wanted to have our music heard. So we hopped out on the

## PRIMAL SPONTANEOUS PERFECT

road." The band recorded a 12-inch record for Crasshole Records out of Baltimore and right after Oakes joined the band they recorded the diamond-in-the-rough record *Reinventing Axl Rose* for Gainesville punk stalwarts, No Idea Records. The future was bright.

Despite the band's sound, a mix of Guinness-fueled aggression and traditional rock and roll, Gabel insists that their tastes are constantly evolving. "Influences are a weird thing. The stuff that I always listened to, like Creedence Clearwater Revival, doesn't influence my material as much as things I'll get into for short periods," he tells me. "I find that if I'm listening to a certain band or genre for a while that will influence my writing more so than any of the music I have grown up loving. But, I listen to different stuff now than I listened to two years ago, and two years before that. So, I guess I'm just made up of all the music I've listened to my entire life." One would assume that Gabel grew up on a steady diet of bands like Fifteen, Crimpshrine, and Crass. In contrast, Neil Young and Bob Dylan could be considered equally as influential on the band's writing as any hard rock. Nonetheless, their fusion of punk, folk, country, and rock and roll is evident and appealing to anyone who gives it a chance.

A handful of EPs, a full length, and several hundred beers later, Against Me! found themselves at home with Fat Wreck Chords and released *As The Eternal Cowboy* last year. "We really like the Fat Wreck people. We believe in what they do and how they treat their bands. As soon as we signed, NOFX took us to Japan and when we got back the punk community that supported us just backlashed. We got our tires slashed in Long Island with graffiti that read: 'Against DIY,' spray painted on our van." Still, the label has been a good home for the band. They've expanded their audience and realized their goal of getting their music out to as many people as possible. They've remained a subversive cultural critic that still threatens the status quo that sells heaps of records from Florida to Maine and beyond.

Obviously the jangly guitars and introspective lyrics struck a chord with suburban youths across the country and they've become one of the most talked about names in punk rock. Upon releasing *As The Eternal Cowboy* in the fall of 2003, replete with a cover mocking Mötley Crüe's *Too Fast For Love* artwork, the band was swamped with comparisons to The Clash, Stiff Little Fingers, and other bands intent on raising awareness in an apathetic rock environment. Their strong political views and socially conscious lyrics may be to blame. "Politics for me are a result of my personal experiences and that's how I convey my feelings in the songs. Life is political by nature," explains Gabel. "We're all active politically but we never wanted to alienate people with our personal politics. We want to be important and respected but we don't want to drive people away just because of our views." Unlike many bands with subversive political insights at the forefront of their music, both socially active kids appreciate Against Me! as well as people who merely like them for their hooks and cathartic harmonies.

Plus, Against Me!'s politics are not the kind you'd find in the newspaper. Rather, they've been refined in the ways of Woody Guthrie or Bob Dylan—through personal

experiences, both good and bad. "I grew up in an army family. I'm a high school dropout and when I was 15 I was the victim of police brutality," Gabel continues very nonchalantly. "Experiences like those will shape your politics more than any book." With a microphone as his sounding board and his fans as his forum, Gabel has taken it upon himself to bring such issues to light. Music has always been a catalyst for change, but with 25 years of punk sloganeering it's hard to be taken seriously sometimes. Regardless, the band couldn't pass up the opportunity to Rock Against Bush on the Punk Voter tour this past winter. The tour consistently sold out venues and helped register 2,000 new voters.

The band addresses the current climate of musical apathy, where bands are more content to sing about chicks than about social progression. They also take aim at the empty sloganeering of those who appropriate revolutionary ideology and imagery for fashion purposes. On their latest album the song "Cliché Guevara" expresses this like a hammer on a nail. Gabel insists: "'Cliché Guevara' is about the dumbing down of political symbols. It's about the images and ideas that were once dangerous now becoming meaningless over time. Ché Guevara was once this revolutionary figure, now he is that guy on the Rage Against The Machine T-shirt or on a poster in a record store." Gabel hits a chord when pointing out that the images of Ché Guevara, Bob Marley, and even Sid Vicious are now big business. "There is no individual person at blame but the dumbing down of culture with buzz words and slogans takes away any of the original meaning. To regain vitality or to preserve what exists people need to become more inventive than relying on the older images of the past."

What helps the band stand out from the 25 years of political punk bands before them is the way they bridge the gap between political and personal struggle. The band delves into both and expresses them with the same sense of urgency and personal connection. Many of the songs on *As The Eternal Cowboy* deal with issues stemming from Gabel's ongoing divorce and battle with drug addiction.

"The whole record was written with my divorce in the backdrop," elaborates Gabel. "I put it all into the lyrics of the song, the entire experience." Heartbreak may be a well-worn subject in rock, but it's one that never ceases to inspire creativity.

Drug addiction, on the other hand, is a double-edged sword. While many great musicians have glorified drugs as a creative tool, Gabel is quick to point out that they are equally destructive. The song "T.S.R." on their latest album is an autobiographical account of Gabel's own problems with addiction. "I've had on and off drug problems my whole life. In the past I've used drugs in ways that weren't recreational and before I wrote 'T.S.R.' I went on a ten-day bender." In the same way that the band avoids simplifying the political and social climate, they also avoid whitewashing the consequences of drug abuse.

"I remember one night on that bender, I felt that I'd done too much and I could feel my heart racing. 'T.S.R.' is about losing control and I don't think that's talked about much in the punk scene unless it's being glorified," concludes Gabel. With emaciated rockers





in stretch jeans plastered all over music magazines, the heroin-chic look is definitely back in style, if it ever went away at all.

Personal introspection and life struggles have translated into an intimate connection between band and audience. Shows like the one at the Pratt Institute are becoming the band's specialty. They have been leaving a wake of sold out clubs in support of their new album.

Much like the band's live show, there is little premeditation to their sound or success. "I really like that it's happened the way it has because it gives us so much freedom," Gabel tells me. "We love that we can do this the way we're doing it, but if it all ended tomorrow, it would still be awesome that we got this far. We've already gone farther than any of us expected." With that said, the band doesn't seem like they'll be giving it all up anytime soon.

They are currently writing songs for a split CD with Lucero to be released on Jade Tree. Subsequently, they have plans to tour Europe before settling down to record a new album. The band has been keeping a tight lid on new material, but bassist Andrew Seward offers: "We haven't repeated ourselves on any of our records and we're not going to start now. On the last record we had an upright bass and piano. None of that was pre-planned; it was spontaneous." In the grand tradition of iconoclastic punk rock bands, Against Me! are not afraid to mix things up for their fans. The band never sought out the attention they've gotten and they intend to go in whatever direction they wish.

There are certain themes that will remain constant with the band. They will always exist on their own terms, and are not apprehensive about calling it a day if ever that should change. "I think what gives the band vitality is our knowledge that it could all end tomorrow," Gabel tells me. "If I feel like I'm in one place for too long I start to go nuts. I want to play music and I don't care if that's on a street corner or in a concert hall." Nonetheless, the concert hall becomes more and more like home for these guys with each successive tour.

Against Me! are living by their Do-It-Yourself ethics and it is starting to pay off well. They have snowballed from a one-man acoustic act to one of the hottest bands on the punk rock touring circuit. "I feel that is rebellious to the system in itself," Gabel says with a smile. "I want to play music and do something extraordinary with my life. I don't want to waste my life with some shitty job."

Playing clubs every night sounds like the perfect job, but regardless of what is at stake, the band still confronts authority at any opportunity. After security attempted to halt the show at Pratt due to several hundred fans outside trying to storm the venue, the band threw their instruments down and invited the audience on stage as bassist Seward climbed the scaffolding behind the drums. When other bands rush to their dressing rooms and remove themselves from their audience, Against Me! can be seen hanging out after the show, and in some cases joining in with the fans' mischief. "Punk rock should be dangerous," remarks Gabel. "If punk isn't forward thinking and threatening, then something's wrong." Bands like Against Me! give hope to the cynical—punk rock is still dangerous and not all rockstars have let success go to their heads. ■

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# HOLDING ON

At the Intersection of Compassion and Action.

*Written By: Ronen Kauffman*

Whether it's been the sound, the style, or the hype, rock music has always managed to keep a prime location on the radar of culture fiends everywhere. Its appeal is derived from countless elements that result in an ever-intriguing spectacle that appears larger than life. One can view it under a microscope of sociological, historical, and cultural significance to try to find out what makes it so appealing and life-altering. If you ask me, however, rock and roll just kicks ass, so it's obvious why people like it so much.

However, rock music's more serious contributions to the world are sometimes forgotten or overlooked. Despite a rich history of social participation, the genre continues to be defined in mass culture largely by its less sophisticated elements—the sex, the drugs, the

self-absorbed megalomania. In turn, most anything that evokes a social conscience is ignored. Many people do not want to listen to rhetoric as set to the sounds of power chords. Furthermore, many political rock and roll outfits who command a strong pop appeal are seen as nothing more than pissed off and angst-ridden. Artists and music industry professionals often steer clear of getting too involved in these type of bands for fear of alienating potential fans who may come off as being overly preachy. It's pretty simple: big rock sells, and the rainforests don't.

That is, of course, except in the hardcore and punk world, where the art form and its followers have broadcast a cry for social responsibility and compassion since day one. Sure, these values are often interpreted

in ways that leave much to be desired, but overall, punk promotes a culture that not only embraces social responsibility, it encourages and in some cases requires it.

With an ever-lasting "fuck you" to the more self-important tendencies of the rock community, the genre has characterized itself largely by this desire—to actually do something about problems, instead of just singing about them. From mass political mobilization to helping out a single friend in need, the result is a category of music that comes with a conscience inspiring activism and philanthropy.



It might have started in punk's earliest days,



**STRETCH ARMSTRONG**



with the now-legendary organization Rock Against Racism. Spearheaded in the U.K. in the 1970's the group focused on fighting European neo-Nazi groups like the National Front. R.A.R.'s crowning achievement was a rally and concert called "Carnival Against The Nazis" that took place at Victoria Park in London in April of 1978. At this event, bands like The Clash, and X-Ray-SpeX joined forces with reggae bands like Steel Pulse and played to nearly 100,000 protesters—by far, the largest crowd to which any punk band had ever played. Drawing attention from the national media, punk music soon became a beacon for disenchanted youth who were hungry for change, even if they didn't go about pursuing it in the most constructive ways. As for the concert, it served as an early ashpoint, helping to define a music and its culture. The bands all played for free that day. It was, in fact, a benefit show.

The following 25 years would see many interpretations of just what exactly it meant to be punk, but the will to action remained a constant presence. Whether it was Crass' anarchopunk separationism or Dave Dictor and his band MDC helping turn nihilists into vegetarians, punk rock became increasingly about doing instead of merely dreaming. By the time American hardcore emerged in the 1980's to reorient a then-stumbling subculture, politics, compassion, and the human experience were confirmed as essential themes of modern punk rock. Organized efforts like Positive Force DC, Food Not Bombs, and other groups emerged to serve as magnets for those who liked their music loud, and their lives full of action.

By the time the '90's rolled around, the Do-It-Yourself philosophy had become the central punk ethos and nearly synonymous with underground aggressive rock. DIY was huge in the punk scene and the sentiment was being invoked deliberately, specifically, and on a wider scale than ever before. Whether it was promoting activist literature on merchandise tables or bringing a can of food to a show, the intersection of punk music and proactive, compassionate values was bustling with activity. Concerts in rented halls and basements would often benefit any number of causes, from clean needle programs to health clinics to books for prisoners. It was a far cry from the less directed punk culture of the '80's. Once fueled by an outward rejection of anything remotely constructive, punk was now reshaping its identity as a vehicle for earnest, thoughtful civic action.

Many of today's punk and hardcore powerplayers took root in that environment, applying the same ethic to their own projects. There was Revelation Records, which began as an effort by Jordan Cooper to put out albums by bands promoting the straightedge lifestyle. Ebullition Records and *HeartattaCK* fanzine emerged as a franchise to engage a thoughtful, almost hyper-progressive attitude towards the de-corporatization of hardcore. The overtly left-leaning *Punk Planet* magazine supplanted *Maximumrocknroll* as the monthly punk bible of choice for many. It dug deeper into globally relevant content, re-dedicating punk rock to self-criticism and improvement.

Both the causes and approaches embraced by many in the '90's scene were widely varied—sometimes even contradictory or downright silly. What unified the many different manifestations was a distinct will to have purpose, and to be effective. It wasn't just about the particular things that inspired action, it

was about the essence of doing.

Even in very personal ways, the dynamic scene of the '90's frequently turned spirit into reality. Take, for example, the story of Matt Leveton, a well-known figure in New Jersey's underground punk scene. He and close friend, Benny Horowitz, helped establish the Manville, NJ Elks Lodge as a hardcore mecca, booking shows there for both local and touring bands. Over time, Leveton emerged as a central figure in what had become a large and nationally-recognized scene. In 1998, when a car accident rendered him a quadriplegic, the hardcore and punk community rallied to his side.

Having moved to South Carolina right before his accident, Leveton was living with members of the band Stretch Arm Strong. He and the band had met through the shows at the Manville Elks Lodge, eventually becoming good friends and then roommates. Following the accident, the band organized a small benefit show in Columbia, SC and soon afterwards, two larger shows were planned in New Jersey. Recalls vocalist Chris McLane, "The only thing we could do was say, 'Hey, this is what happened to our friend, a lot of you guys knew him between Jersey and South Carolina. And if we could just raise a couple thousand dollars to buy him a new chair, or raise some money so they could remodel a room in their house... that's just what we wanted to do. And that's what we did."

A host of well-known bands, including Bane, Nora, and Brother's Keeper all agreed to lend their talents to helping this member of their community. "I was able to get Hatebreed to play, which was unheard of for those guys to do a benefit," recalls McLane. "I think I paid them a hundred dollars, plus dinner. You know, just gas money down to Jersey. And Tim and the guys from Ensign were able to get some other bands. There were so many people that came together."

Leveton remembers the impact of the work done on his behalf: "It was very helpful, and it got my family through a lot. It helped pay for a lot of my equipment that I'm using, exercise equipment and some of the hospital bills. The money did a lot to get me through it emotionally. That was one of the big, big benefits."

As the turn of the century approached, the pendulum began to swing. If strident activism and heady content had become too dominant in the punk scene, the almost ironic resurrection of more rock and roll oriented elements—the sunglasses and whiskey, so to speak—would be the cultural response from many involved. With some in the hardcore community becoming wrapped up in self-righteous posturing and a punker-than-thou approach, the imminent reaction would inadvertently help set the stage for the next chapter of the story.

Being called a rockstar had once been an insult to one's humility and commitment to the scene. It would later become a simple statement of fact. Whether it was the internet, the music industry, or money, the future was bringing the music and its community into unknown territory. While the tradition of conscientious action would prove to be more than just another punk rock trend, it too would have to change. As punk moved out of basements and into the mainstream, its tradition of activism and philanthropy would soon follow.



Today, dynamic and active scenes like those characteristic of the '90's are harder to find. With the ongoing mass-media absorption of punk and hardcore, and the subsequent shift in the financial environment for those involved, the scale of things has changed dramatically. DIY tours and basement shows have lost ground to booking agents and ballrooms. Punk bands sell more records and look a lot prettier than they did just a few years back. You can now find everything from emocore to metalcore in stores like Wal-Mart and Target. It's true, things are different.

What of that impulse to somehow make a difference, whether on a global scale, or a personal one? It's still there, although it is different, too. As the infrastructure of punk and hardcore music changes those pursuing important causes are learning to re-package the sentiment while keeping it relevant to the current environment and faithful to its origins. They're also learning to redefine how action can look.

"I think the more popular punk gets, the more opportunities there are for people who are making that music and providing that music," says Louis Posen, the owner of Sub City Records. Sub City donates proceeds from each release to charitable organizations. "[Our work is] always con-

nected to trying to do something positive in the world, trying to make a difference—not just sit around, but be active." Since its inception, Sub City—a part of Hopeless Records, home of many noted bands including Thrice—has raised and distributed over \$300,000 to more than 25 charities.

Sub City is also a main sponsor of the Take Action! franchise, which benefits The Kristin Brooks Hope Center, a Virginia-based non-profit organization that deals with issues pertaining to mental health and suicide. With their Hopeline program, KBHC provides a toll-free hotline (1-800-SUICIDE) and other outreach mechanisms for people in crisis. Countless high-profile bands—from Poison The Well to The Ataris to Shadows Fall—have worked with Take Action! They have used package tours and compilation CDs to raise over \$150,000 for Hopeline in the past three years. According to KBHC founder and

president Reese Butler, that money has done more than sustain the agency's operations and allow them to expand their programs.

"Where I think [Take Action! and Sub City] have done the most good," says Butler, "is with the people our organization is trying to help. We have gotten, literally hundreds and hundreds of emails from kids after the concerts, saying how they were suicidal. And how, in their minds, their attitude changed as a result of the tour itself. How the musicians encouraged them and how it helped them." With at least a few lives saved, the Hopeline has indeed met their goal and surpassed it.

Perhaps due to this dramatic and potentially life-saving impact, the Sub City/Take Action! phenomenon has had a ripple effect throughout both the punk community and the non-profit sector. Asian Man Records impresario Mike Park had been, according to Butler, a "kindred

spirit" with Posen in building Take Action!, but is now focused on his Plea For Peace organization, aimed at the more general notion of promoting peace through music. Other non-profits dealing with mental health issues have also seen the potential of linking mission with music.

The Take Action! model "showed those organizations that they, too, could do it," says Butler, "and it inspired them to develop programs. They didn't realize that this could be done. And, by actually seeing it happen, somebody stepping out there and doing it, it gave them the courage and inspiration and the path, the direction to take to do it."

Jeff Ott, former frontman for the East Bay bands Crimpshrine and Fifteen, has numerous releases on Sub City. Ott seems to embrace the shift in scale that has taken place within punk culture.

"To some degree, a lot of people are more politi-

## TAKING BACK SUNDAY



cally sophisticated than they were 15 years ago," says Ott. "In a weird sort of way, it's like, everybody was political then, but just like, to a certain depth. You know, 'Fuck Ronald Regan' or whatever. Nowadays it seems like the vast majority of people into the music aren't active at all—but the people who are active, are way further into it than they were 15 years ago." After almost 30 years of experimentation, it should be no surprise to see activism and philanthropy taken to that next level. Organizations like Sub City, Take Action!, Peta2, and Anti-Flag's Underground Action Alliance represent a new generation of doers, who are changing the rules of civic participation by tapping into the spirit of the punk community.

Amidst the novelty and sheer largesse of it all, that spirit still survives on a personal level as well. Take, for example, Sean McGrath. A founding member of Saves The Day and also known for his work in the bands Mouthpiece and Hands Tied, McGrath

York City and word just traveling, literally, all around the world," continues McDonald. "Sean got a lot of notes on the website from Australia, and Switzerland. That, I think, is definitely the social awareness and the social activism within the scene. It just blew my mind—it still does. I defy anyone to find another genre of music that has as high a quotient of people who actually care about issues and people."

McGrath is sure that the action taken by those around him is owed, at least in part, to the hardcore scene: "I think that punk rock and hardcore music, in general, breeds a certain type of personality. A certain type of person is drawn to it. And fortunately it seems to be people with more compassion, and open mindedness. I always ran into very talented people, from the bands themselves to the people taking photos, the people writing about the bands, to anything. When you're a kid and you first go to a show and you fall on the ground, and someone picks you up. It just breeds that mentality where you want to help people out."

# When you're a kid and you first go to a show and you fall on the ground, and someone picks you up, it just breeds that mentality where you want to help people out.

was diagnosed with advanced gall bladder cancer at age 26. Given a prognosis that left many questions unanswered, he immediately began aggressive treatment—which, of course, incurred staggering costs for a man with no health insurance.

Much like in the case of Matt Leveton, it was the hardcore and punk community that stepped up to help the situation. Before falling ill in 2002, McGrath had worked at MTV, where he had become friends with producer Bruce McDonald and then-MTV employee Dave Pfeffer. When McGrath got sick, McDonald and Pfeffer organized a benefit show at NYC's Irving Plaza. The bill included Thursday, Taking Back Sunday, Midtown, and The Movielife. The show was called "Hold On To Your Friends" and it raised over \$21,000 in one night.

"In the beginning I didn't have any [insurance] and everything was so much money," says McGrath. "I mean, my second surgery was \$500,000. Even though Medicaid covers it for the most part, you still have to pay all these extra things like co-pays and everything else, and it just soaks up all your money. When I was first was out of the hospital, for like almost a year, I couldn't really walk too well. My legs had degenerated. I was down to 97 lbs. and all the muscle mass in my body went away. I was just, like, sticks. So I couldn't really walk and had a wheelchair for a long time. And I had to take cars everywhere, to get around the city. It cost me \$45 every single time I'd go to my chemo session, which at the time were every week." The staggering costs can be unbearable in addition to the havok that chemo therapy wreaks on one's body—both physical and emotional.

"That sort of advanced cancer is just going to slap you in the face," says McDonald. "So Dave and I just sat down one night over a couple of beers and said, 'We've got to do something.' We put out the feelers to everyone we knew in the community. It was fascinating how quickly the bands signed on and really made it easy for us to throw the show." While benefit shows like Farm Aid and Live Aid and any other—Aid shows are great for major rock stars' public image, they hardly ever believe in the causes. With the punk community, the intentions are a bit more sincere.

Taking Back Sunday vocalist Adam Lazzara recalls being asked to play. "I think the first thing that popped into our heads was that we couldn't imagine being in that position. The biggest thing with Sean, for me, was the record *Can't Slow Down*. And I know it's probably not cool to like, say this, but I don't give a fuck. That record got me through so much. And so when we were called, it was like, 'OK, now I have a chance to help a dude who did more for my life than I could ever explain.'" Lazzara and his band did indeed take the chance to help Sean, and drove overnight from Atlanta so that they could play for a friend, for free.

"The scene in general, at least where I grew up... people always stuck together no matter what," explains Lazzara. "And now that things are on a bigger scale, it's like you can't do stuff like you used to be able to. For us, playing for Sean is a way to help keep that sense of community."

"It was just amazing, the domino effect of us putting on a little benefit in New



Unavoidably, there will always be questions about the relationship between conscientious social action and rock music. Would Matt Leveton or Sean McGrath have gotten the same treatment had they just been kids in the crowd, as opposed to celebrities within their respective scenes? Did people act because these individuals had made real contributions, lending their talents and passions to help build those communities in the first place? How political can punk rock get before it unbalances the other things that make it so popular, fun, and cool? What about rebellion—can it be reconciled with an almost boy scout-like desire to pitch in around the neighborhood, so to speak? How did we go from "smash the state" to Punk Voter?

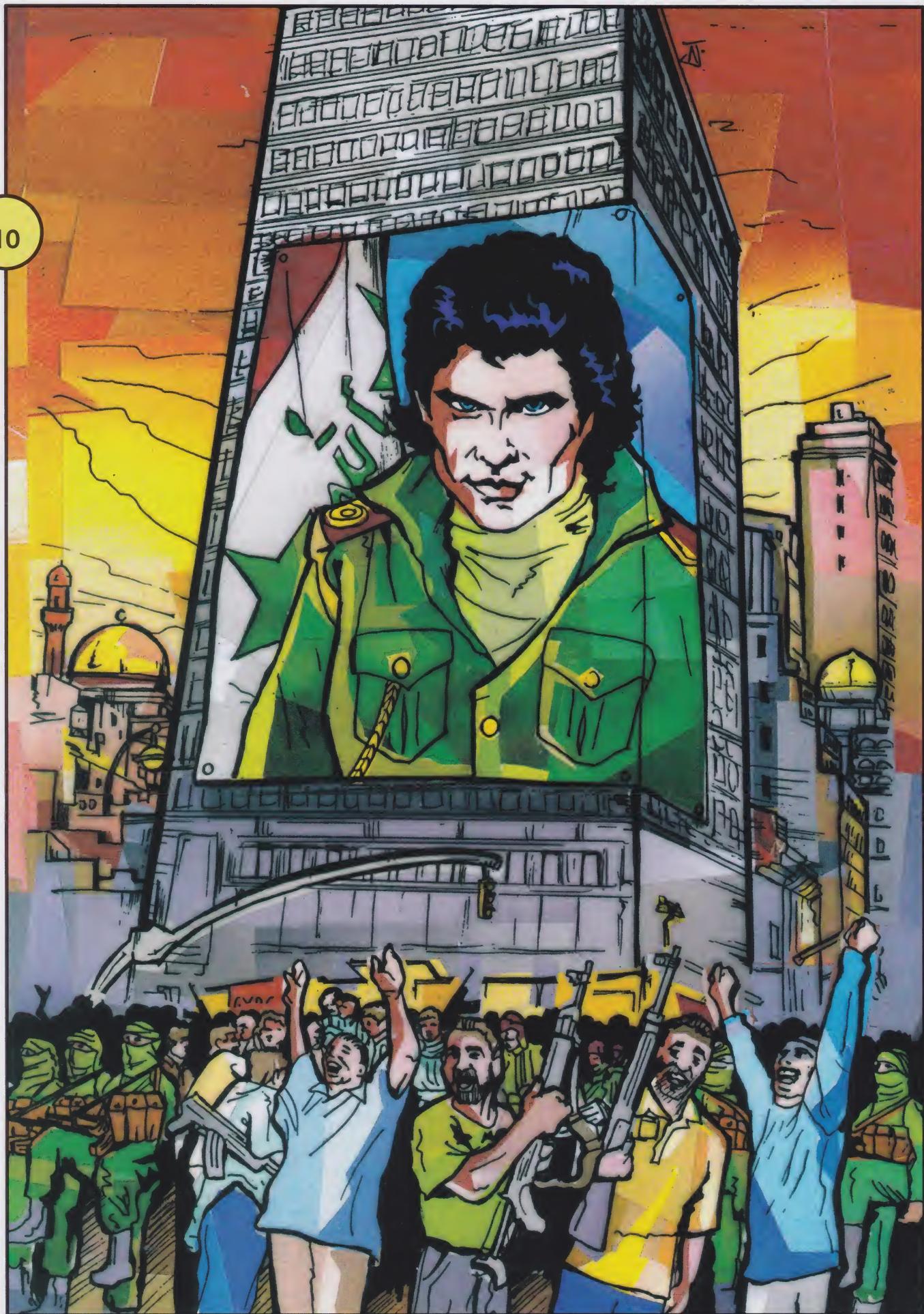
In the end, of course, what matters is what's actually happening—that, in the wake of reality, some in the hardcore and punk community continue to apply their ideals in ways that transform daily life. Whereas music was once the main medium through which punk culture addressed the concerns of its community, new and sophisticated mechanisms are emerging; ones that take novel approaches and affect change both within the scene and in the greater world. Though the environment is ever-changing, unknown territory rarely hinders those determined to make vision into reality.

2004 has already seen a Take Action! show at this year's South By Southwest music conference, and the franchise will have its own stage at the 2004 Warped Tour. Organizations like Sub City, the Plea For Peace Foundation, Peta2, the Underground Action Alliance, and countless others continue to reach out to music lovers on many fronts. As for McGrath, whose condition persists—McDonald and Pfeffer have planned a second Hold On To Your Friends benefit show, scheduled to take place in July—once again at Irving Plaza, with My Chemical Romance and others providing the soundtrack to an evening of good will, and fundraising. This time, McGrath intends to use the money a little differently.

"We want to start putting certain money aside in case this happens to someone else, or there's an accident, or anything we hear of where someone needs some financial assistance," says McGrath. "I'd love to be there to help them out as much as I was helped out in the beginning, and continuing to this day."



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**NAME: DAVID HASSELHOFF**

**AGE:** 52

**OCCUPATION:** Actor/pop sensation/liberator of Germany.

**NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS:** Hasselhoff's albums have gone triple platinum in Europe and *Baywatch* is seen in 140 countries, extending his following to well over one billion people.

**HOBBIES:** Scuba diving, hiking, white water rafting, and jogging (on a beach, in slow motion).

**CATCH PHRASE:** "Eat shit you commie bastard!"

**FAVORITE SEXUAL POSITION:** "The K.I.T.T." A Hasselhoff original where David talks like a robot while he "checks under the hood" and "services the exhaust pipe."

**IN A WORD:** Uhr Geil!

Not long ago, Lord Guiness dubbed this hunky, blue-eyed thespian, "The Most Watched TV Star In The World" in his prestigious book of records, forever galvanizing a position for Herr Hasselhoff on our illustrious list. This preeminent position was not always Hasselhoff's for the taking. I mean sure, we all knew him from his humble beginnings on *The Young And The Restless*. Yeah, our respect and admiration for his utter awesomeness grew as he entertained us as Michael Knight (a role that garnered him a People's Choice Award for Most Popular Actor). And yes, this admiration, turned obsession, became a bit frightening as we lusted for him as the dashing lifeguard, Mitch Buchanon on that ode to T&A, *Baywatch*. However, it was only after his soulful voice sang out "Looking for Freedom" from atop the Berlin Wall on New Year's Eve 1989, that we unanimously decided that this man was not a man at all, and was, in fact, a god. So, Mr. Hasselhoff, in your own brilliant words I salute you by saying, "I'll be there."

Steve Basilone



## LAW OF INERTIA'S TOP 10 FAVORITE CULTS OF PERSONALITY



**NAME: JERRY FALWELL**

**NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS:** 24,000 at his church, millions on TV.

**AGE:** 71

**HOBBIES:** Damning gay people to hell, insulting competing religions, founding right wing organizations.

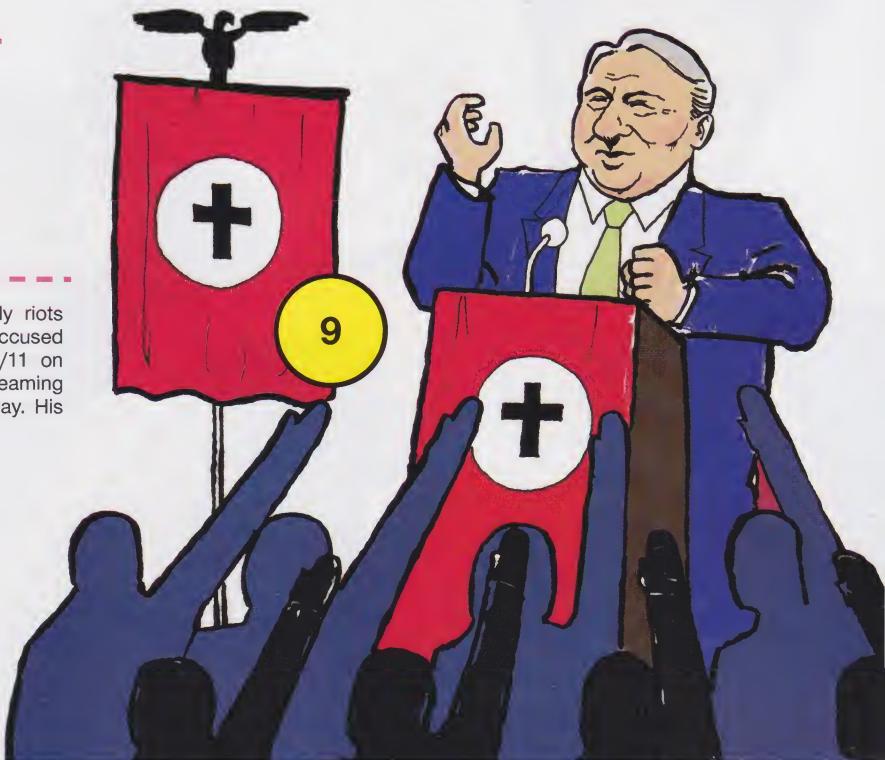
**CATCH PHRASE:** "Praise Jesus!"

**FAVORITE SEXUAL POSITION:** Missionary, when God wills it.

**IN A WORD:** Almighty.

Among his many accomplishments, Jerry Falwell has incited deadly riots in India after calling the Muslim prophet Mohammed "a terrorist," accused the purple teletubby of encouraging homosexuality, and blamed 9/11 on abortionists, gays, feminists and the ACLU. But you won't find him screaming about the day of reckoning through a dirty megaphone on the subway. His nationally syndicated television program, *The Old Time Gospel Hour*, does it for him. He's Jerry Falwell, and he's coming to save you. Founder of the largest church in North America, the 24,000 member strong Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, VA, and co-founder, with co-crazy Pat Robertson, of The Moral Majority, Falwell's fundamentalist Christian preachings have spread ignorance and intolerance throughout the country for more than four decades.

Dan Hoyle

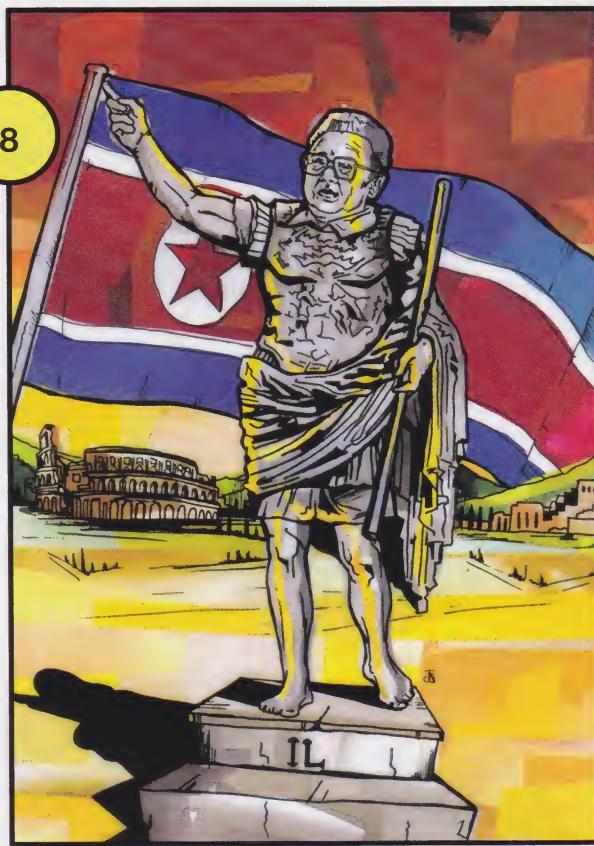
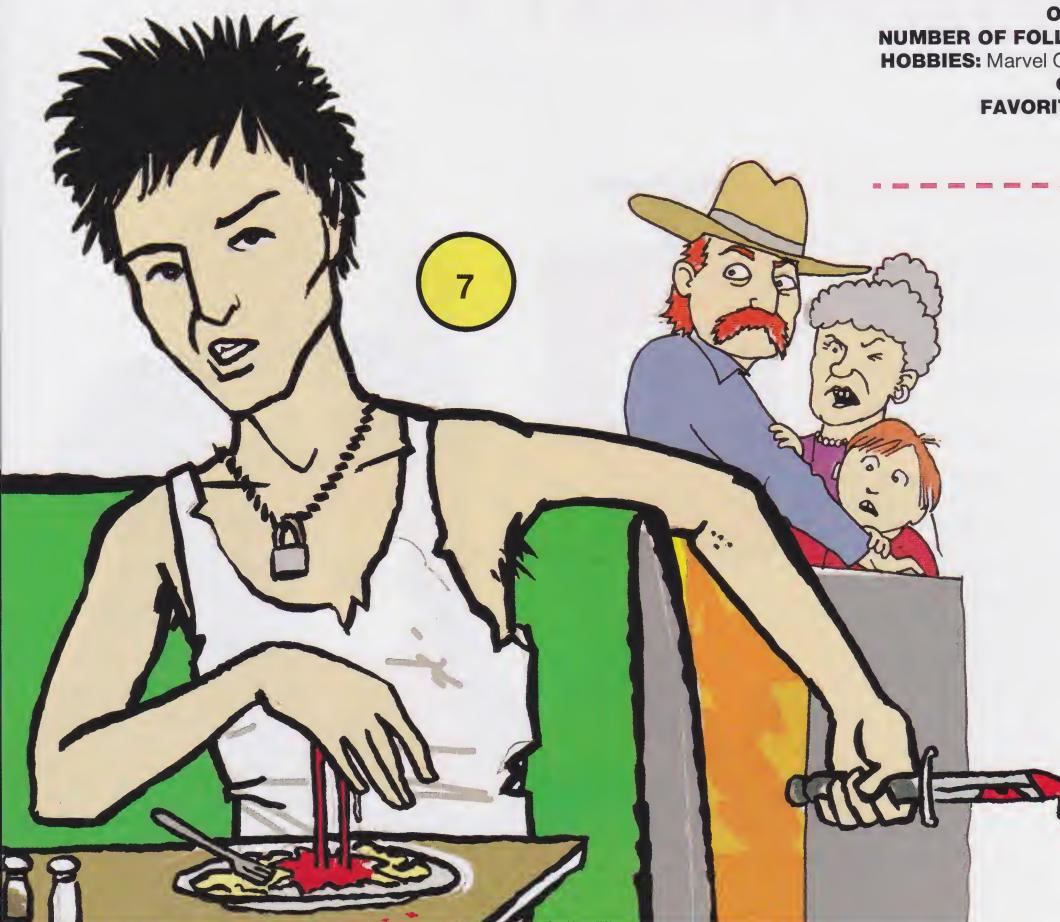


**NAME: KIM JONG IL****AGE:** 62**OCCUPATION:** Tyrannical Dear Leader of North Korea.**NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS:** About 22 Million, with staunch emphasis on quality over quantity.**HOBBIES:** Riding rare Russian stallions, keeping up with the Hollywood scene, collecting platform shoes, hanging out in his underwater mansion, greasing the axis of evil.**CATCH PHRASES:** "Keep clapping, or else."**FAVORITE SEXUAL POSITION:** Anything goes in his nightly orgy with his Swedish concubines.**IN A WORD:** Cartoonish.

Supposedly born on top of the highest mountain in North Korea under a double rainbow while thunder and lightning struck all around and a "very bright star" shown down upon him, rogue leader Kim Jong Il exhibits every erratic characteristic one could hope for in five feet two inches of tyrannical ruling power. During his tenure, millions of North Koreans have starved to death while he has rung up an annual Hennessy bill somewhere around three quarters of a million dollars. He spends four percent of North Korea's GDP on propaganda supporting his own greatness and some of this money has gone in part to informing his people of the need to call him everything from Dear Leader to Guiding Leader to Great Guiding Leader to Unprecedented Great Man to the current Outstanding Leader. His birthday has been declared the "People's Greatest Holiday" and is celebrated as a national holiday. His preferred mode of travel is a nuclear-war-proof train given to his father by Joseph Stalin and features satellite communication, a banquet hall, and a group of women known only as "The Pleasure Squad." Oh yeah, this guy also commands the fourth largest army in the world and has a nuclear arsenal powerful enough to wipe out the entire East Coast.

Adam Lindenbaum

8

**NAME: SID VICIOUS, A.K.A. JOHN SIMON RITCHIE****AGE:** Died at 21, would be almost 47 now.**OCCUPATION:** Sex Pistols' replacement bassist.**NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS:** Anyone too young to know any better.**HOBBIES:** Marvel Comics, chemical abuse, masochism, manorexia.**CATCH PHRASE:** "I did it myyyyyy wayyyyy!"**FAVORITE SEXUAL POSITION:** Anything that involved being in front of Malcolm McLaren's camera.**IN A WORD:** Swindled.

The fact that he took his *nom de gloom*, Sid Vicious, from Johnny Rotten's hamster succinctly illustrates the dichotomy that was John Simon Ritchie: a blank slate who had his cultic traits scribbled on him by manipulators great (manager, McLaren) and small (girlfriend, Nancy Spungen). Perhaps Sid's most significant character trait is his "Whatever you can do to me, I can do it to myself ten times worse, and live" attitude. Witness his famous encounter with a Texan cowboy in a filthy diner.

Spotting Vicious at a booth, the cowboy left his family and approached the Sex Pistols. He introduced himself by saying, "You're that Vicious fella, aintcha? Hear you think you're pretty tough. What'cha think of this?" Then, he stubbed out a lit cigarette on his hand. In response, Sid picked up his knife, split open his hand, and bled all over his scrambled eggs, which he then ate smiling, while the cowboy gathered his family and fled. I guarantee you living-height-of-his-fame John Simon Ritchie never felt stronger, and that's why he continues to draw secretly self-pitying disciples a quarter century after his death.

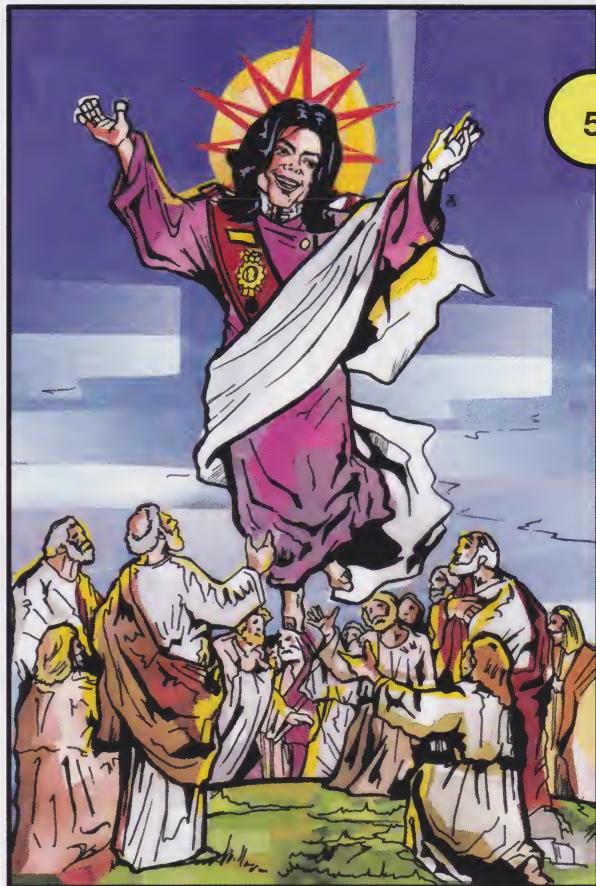
Jim Jazwiecki

**NAME: MUAMMAR QADDAFI****AGE:** 62**OCCUPATION:** Yet another iron-fisted Arab autocrat.**NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS:** The 5.5 million proud citizens of Libya.**PREFERRED FASHION STATEMENT:** Prior to the mid-'90's: Full military regalia and aviator sunglasses. More recently, traditional Arab headdress and garb.**HOBBIES:** Qaddafi owns part of an Italian soccer team, sponsored the 2004 World Chess Championship, and throughout the '70's casually funded numerous terrorist attacks that served no benefit whatsoever to Libya.**CATCH PHRASE:** "Don't hate the player, hate the game. Jihad!"**FAVORITE SEXUAL POSITION:** The Dirty Sanchez. **IN TWO WORDS:** Compassionate Conservative.

While your mom and dad were dropping acid and not showering during the Summer of Love, Qaddafi was busy seizing control of Libya in a bloodless coup. In his ominous Soviet-style military dress and oversized sunglasses, he confused the world with a string of erratic and violent acts: kidnapping and murdering Olympians, bombing unassuming Berliners at a nightclub, and blowing up a plane full of whiteys over Scotland.

To celebrate, he had his likeness erected over every square inch of his country's territory and became part owner of an Italian soccer club. As the '80's came to a close, so did Qaddafi's golden run. Aviator glasses and militaristic tyranny became unfashionable and Qaddafi was left struggling to find a new identity. In a futile attempt to make up for his dubious past, he became leader of the U.N.'s commission on human rights. Like so many terrorists trying to turn their life around, no one took him (or the U.N.) seriously. Unfortunately, it is rumored that he has plans of returning to the dark side, recently inking a deal with the most hated non-muslim in the world, Joe Francis, to host the next installment of *Girls Gone Wild, The Burkahs Are Off!*

John Streit

**NAME: MICHAEL JACKSON****AGE:** 45**OCCUPATION:** Entertainer.**NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS:** Enough to fill 30 football stadiums.**HOBBIES:** His face, children, Super Bowl halftime shows.**CATCH PHRASE:** "Oooowww!!!"**FAVORITE SEXUAL POSITION:** Naked Twister.**IN A WORD:** Black + White = "Blite"

In the 1980's, Michael Jackson was black and bad, and while coke, the cold war and Reagan raged on, he did his best to keep America sane. Reagan hailed M.J. as a healthy American icon, and Mike honored America by pursuing a uniquely American dream: he climbed the social ladder from a black man to a white woman. But in the '90's, Mike looked at the (wo)man in the mirror about 100 times too many and as his nose narrowed, so did his fan base. When he insisted it didn't matter if you're black or white while he continued fiendishly bleaching his skin, Rodney King and Reginald Denny proved it did. As M.J.'s cheekbones migrated north faster than a truckload of illegal Mexicans, it became clear America would struggle to keep Michael sane, and not the other way around. Now, as M.J. websites feature desperate confessionalists about feeling ugly, one can't help feel a sense of guilt that America's obsessions with appearance and race have turned our once proud prodigal son into the mutant recluse he is today.

Dan Hoyle

**NAME: MORRISSEY****AGE:** 45**OCCUPATION:** Crooner**NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS:** Hard to say, most are hiding at home feeling emasculated.**HOBBIES:** Watching legions of emo kids worship at his alter.**CATCH PHRASE:** "Stop me if you've heard this one before..."**FAVORITE SEXUAL POSITION:** Proponent of abstinence.**IN A WORD:** Pomade

What isn't there to love about a man who makes R. Kelly's syllabic feats seem minuscule? Morrissey has reached out to hordes of emaciated, pale youth, making them feel secure in their own gawkiness and self-hatred. More than just a hairstyle, Morrissey is an incredible lyricist, songwriter, and recluse. Devotees have named bands after his works (Pretty Girls Make Graves anyone?), dedicated movies to his image, and created dance festivals in honor of their hero. Never has whining been so terribly relevant—the empathy his fans feel is inexplicable. Hate it when your friends become successful? Yup. Interested in drugs? Kind of. The more you ignore me the closer I get? You have no idea how closely I've followed your MYSPACE page.

Caitlin Robin

**NAME: MR. WINKLE****NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS:** Legions of devoted fans, led by a retired army general who watches his video every night before going to bed.**HOBBIES:** Posing for pictures, barking at the doorbell.**CATCH PHRASE:** He's a dog, he possesses powers beyond our comprehension, and he doesn't speak English.**FAVORITE SEXUAL POSITION:** Why, doggystyle of course.**IN A HYPHENATED WORD:** Über-cute.

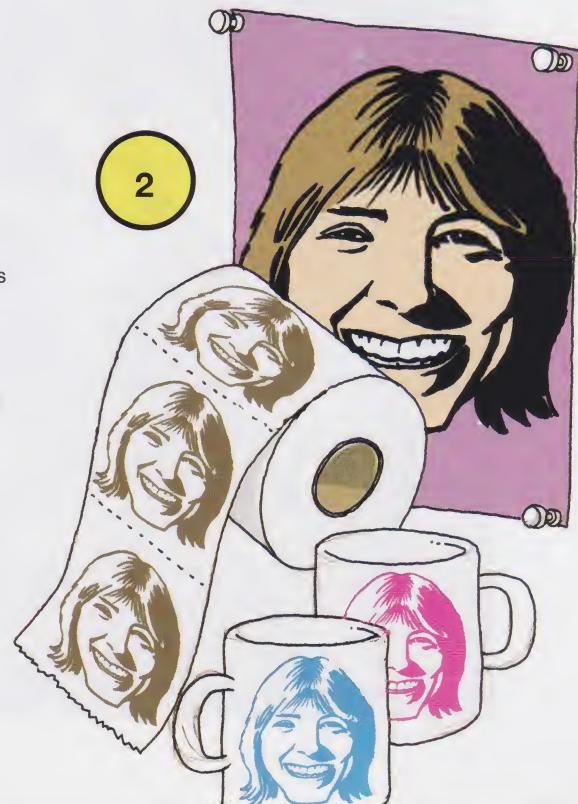
Mr. Winkle is a dog, some say the cutest dog who has ever lived. People have claimed Mr. Winkle's cuteness has prevented them from committing suicide, others have said it kept their marriage together, and still others have made it their dying wish to meet Mr. Winkle. There are those who claim that Mr. Winkle does not exist, that he is a stuffed animal, an animatronic puppet, a space alien. None of these are true. Having met Mr. Winkle in the fur a brief time ago, I can claim with some certainty that while Mr. Winkle may walk around like a retarded robot dog, he is in fact a real dog. His owner, Lara Jo Regan, used to be an award-winning photographer for the likes of *Time* and *Newsweek* until she found a "tuft of fluff" abandoned on the side of the road in Bakersfield. Ever since then, she has given up her career as a photojournalist to photograph Mr. Winkle in her L.A. home. "I live in Winkle's world and I can't get out," she says. "It's like I'm in the cutest prison in the world. I've accepted him as my personal savior and I'm not going to fight it." All hail the messiah of cuteness.

Jake Futernick

**NAME: DAVID CASSIDY****AGE:** 54**OCCUPATION:** Ex-teeny bopper, heart throb, playing Keith Partridge.**NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS:** Hundreds of thousands of grown up little girls (e.g. your mom).**HOBBIES:** Collecting panties and archeology (he's world renowned for his ability to dig up the past).**CATCH PHRASE:** "Leif Garrett is a fag!"**FAVORITE SEXUAL POSITION:** Any position, as long as the woman sings, "I Woke Up In Love This Morning."**IN A WORD:** "Amazing." One fan described in a review how she and her daughter, Cassidy, (yeah, that's right) waited hours after a show to obtain a discarded pick and set list. "Amazing," was all she could say.

On April 12, 1950 the earth trembled as The Cass exploded into this world, forever changing the face of idol worship. B.C. (Before Cassidy), the America that we now know and love was a crazy mixed up place. It was a time overwrought with empty icons the likes of Elvis, James Dean and Marlon Brando. All seemed hopeless as the land was cast in darkness while the masses worshipped silly "rock" and "jazz" demi-gods like Buddy Holly, Miles Davis, and Chuck Berry. All that changed A.D. (After David) when his portrayal of Keith Partridge hit the American bloodstream like a cooked hit of H in the fall of 1970. Cassidy quickly emerged as the original teen idol, becoming the wallpaper of choice for prepubescent girls from Topeka to Kalamazoo. At the peak of Cass-o-mania you could even find his picture adorning the soft double ply sheets of your favorite bathroom tissue. Since then, the world has been righted and we have been blessed with the likes of Hanson, Jordan Knight, and Jonathan Taylor Thomas. Thank you Mr. Cassidy, it was high time somebody returned the apple to this Eden.

Steve Basilone





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**NAME: L. RON HUBBARD****NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS:** Thousands, including every Hollywood movie star, all of them!**HOBBIES:** Running a religion from beyond the grave.**CATCH PHRASE:** "I'd like to start a religion. That's where the money is."**FAVORITE SEXUAL POSITION:** Position is not important, in his prime he'd do any man, woman, child, or farm animal as long as they believed in Scientology.**IN A WORD:** Omnipotent.

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A myth wrapped in an enigma sheathed in a benevolently smiling face, L. Ron Hubbard is Scientology. He created the religion and is revered with the kind of intensity one would expect from any self-appointed god. Some crackpots have claimed that Hubbard was nothing more than a hack science fiction writer who made a bar room bet that he could be the first among his friends to start his own religion, but during my day and a half spent as a Scientologist, I could find no information to back this up. I mean, the man wrote *Dianetics* for Christ's sake (or should that be Hubbard's sake?). If, by some chance these rumors are true and L. Ron was just a ordinary man, who is to say that another man cannot take his place as the patron saint of Scientology? It would take a great man to perform such a task, a man as great as... Travolta! You heard it here first.

**Jake Futernick**

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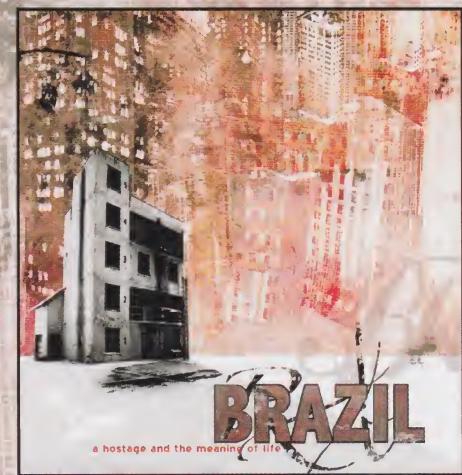
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Engineered and mixed by Alex Newport

# THE ADVENTURES OF THE... **DEADBEAT DAD TASK FORCE**

OUR STORY BEGINS WITH THE DEADBEAT DAD TASK FORCE HOT ON THE TRAIL OF THEIR LATEST SUSPECT, A ONE PETER "P.C." YOUNG. CAPTAIN JOHNNY BOURBON INFORMS HIS FORCE THAT PETER HAS A DAUGHTER WHOSE BIRTHDAY IS LATER THAT AFTERNOON...



NOEL WEARS SHOES BY GOLA, PANTS BY LEVI'S, WATCH BY VESTAL. DEADBEAT DAD TASK FORCE JACKET AVAILABLE AT [WWW.LAWOFINERTIA.COM](http://WWW.LAWOFINERTIA.COM). JAKE WEARS SHOES BY X-LARGE, PANTS BY ANALOG, SHIRT BY ATTICUS, WATCH BY VESTAL, DDTF JACKET AND ARNOLD TRUCKER HAT AVAILABLE AT [WWW.LAWOFINERTIA.COM](http://WWW.LAWOFINERTIA.COM). CAPTAIN JOHNNY BOURBON WEARS SHOES BY ADIDAS, PANTS BY ATTICUS, DDTF CAPTAIN'S JACKET, WATCH AND HAT BY VESTAL.

PHOTOGRAPHER: Jeaneen Lund  
STYLIST: Diane DaSilva  
CONCEPT: Jake Futernick  
BASED ON THE HIT MOVIE: Baby Mamma Drama

## STARRING CAPTAIN JOHNNY BOURBON



CAPTAIN JOHNNY BOURBON IS ON HAND TO CHECK OUT THE SCENE, AS WELL AS A FEW LADIES. SPIRITS ARE HIGH AT THE PARTY, BUT IT REMAINS UNCLEAR IF PETER WILL BE SHOWING UP WITH A PRESENT FOR HIS DAUGHTER AS PROMISED.



MEANWHILE, PETER FACES A DECISION ALL DEADBEAT DADS MUST MAKE: GET THEIR KID A PRESENT OR BLOW THE MONEY ON STRIPPERS...



ATTICUS





ERIKA WEARS TOP BY HAS BEEN, BLONDIE BAG BY HAS BEEN. CAPTAIN JOHNNY BOURBON WEARS SHIRT BY STRIPESS, WATCH BY VESTAL. CYNTHIA WEARS SHIRT BY PINK SPIKE, YAMIN WEARS PANTS AND JACKET BY QUIKSILVER. JESSICA WEARS SHIRT BY PINK SPIKE. SEBASTIAN WEARS PANTS BY DIESEL, SHIRT BY ATTICUS. C.C. WEARS SHOES BY ETNIES, SHIRT BY ATTICUS, JOURNEY BAG BY HAS BEEN.



...AFTER A QUICK TRIP TO THE ATM, PETER  
MAKES HIS FATEFUL DECISION.



SARAH WEARS TOP BY PINK SPIKE, IRON MAIDEN BAG BY HAS BEEN. TAYLOR WEARS SHOES BY X-LARGE, HAT BY STRIKES, SHIRT BY ATTICUS, SHIRT BY O210 LIFESTYLE. DIANE WEARS SHOES BY ETNIES, PANTS BY DC, SHIRT BY DC, COMMANDO JACKET FROM THE SET OF THE SCHWARZENEGGER MOVIE. CAPTAIN JOHNNY BOURBON WEARS SHOES BY ETNIES, WRISTBAND BY DC, SWEATSEDO BY O210 LIFESTYLES AVAILABLE AT WWW.O210LIFESTYLE.COM. PETER "P.C." YOUNG WEARS SHOES BY DC, PANTS BY QUIKSILVER, BELT BY DC, T-SHIRT BY ATTICUS, SHIRT BY ETNIES. JAKE WEARS SHOES BY X-LARGE, SWEATSEDO BY O210 LIFESTYLES, WRISTBANDS BY X-LARGE. NOEL WEARS SHOES BY ETNIES, SWEATSEDO BY O210 LIFESTYLE.



**IN SEARCH OF THE WHEREABOUTS OF MR. YOUNG, CAPTAIN BOURBON GOES ON A DRUNKEN STRIPPER-BEATING RAMPAGE UNTIL HE GETS THE INFORMATION HE NEEDS. HE AND HIS TASK FORCE GO UNDERCOVER AND FIND THEIR MAN IN A COMPROMISING POSITION.**



C.C. WEARS SHIRT BY ATTICUS

FORCED INTO ACTION, JOHNNY  
PLACES THE CALL EVERY COP HATES  
TO MAKE  
“MA’AM, YOUR HUSBAND IS A  
DEADBEAT DAD.”  
“SIGH. OK, TAKE HIM DOWN.”

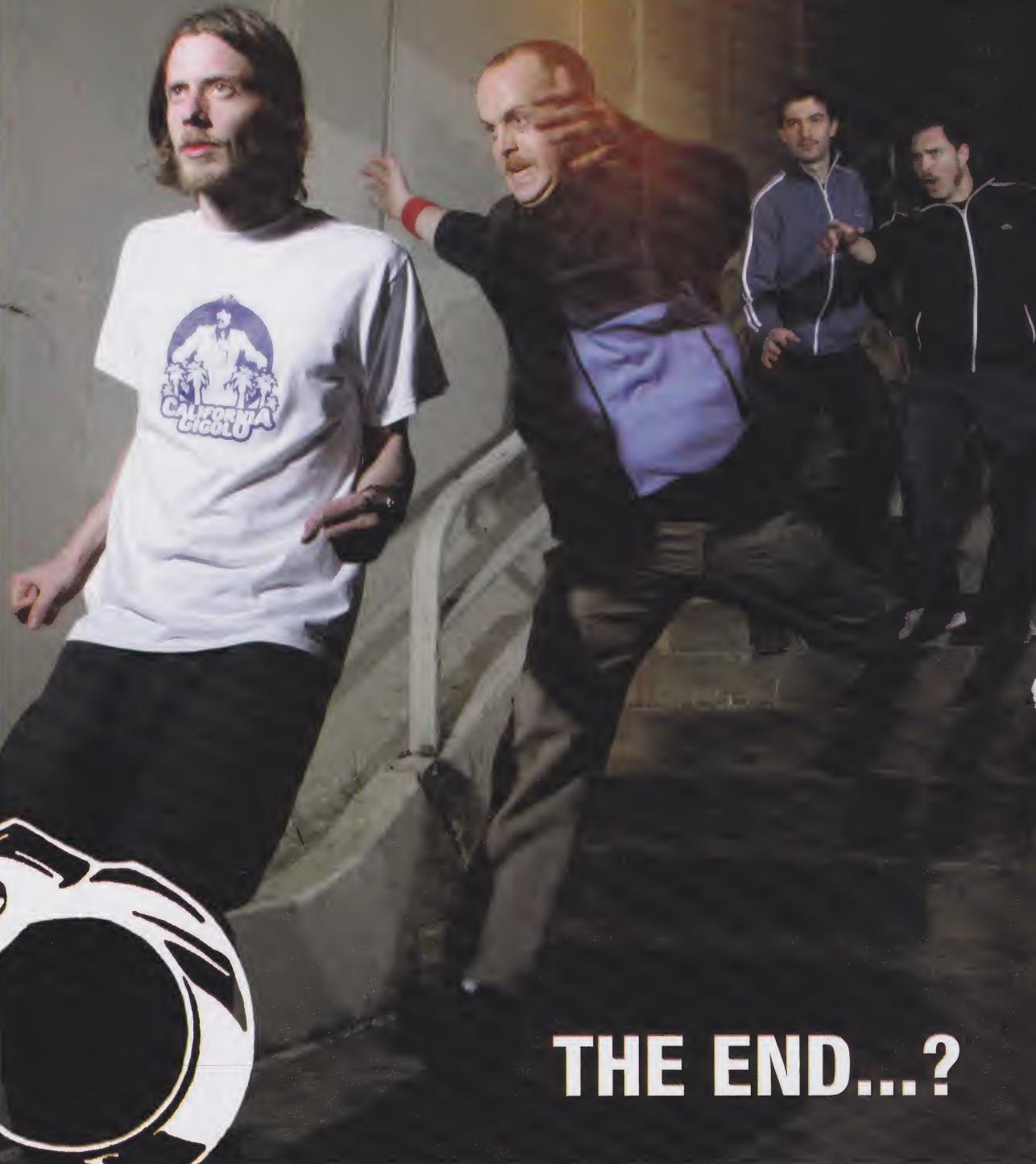


C.C. WEARS SHIRT BY STRHES. PETER WEARS  
SHIRT BY ETNIES, JACKET BY X-LARGE

THE CONFRONTATION

PETER WEARS PANTS BY ATTICUS, SHIRT BY X-LARGE. CAPTAIN JOHNNY BOURBON WEARS SHOES BY ETNIES, PANTS BY X-LARGE, JACKET BY ANALOG. JAKE WEARS SHOES BY GRAVIS, PANTS BY ETNIES, JACKET BY ATTICUS, WATCH BY VESTAL. NOEL WEARS SHOES BY ETNIES, PANTS AND JACKET BY ATTICUS.

THE DEADBEAT DAD TASK FORCE REACTS SWIFTLY AND WITHIN MINUTES, PETER IS BROUGHT TO JUSTICE. AND SO OUR STORY ENDS. JUST ANOTHER DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE DEADBEAT DAD TASK FORCE.



THE END...?



## FROM FIRST TO LAST

dear diary, my teen angst has a bodycount.

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## BAD RELIGION

THE EMPIRE STRIKES FIRST



Epitaph  
6.8.2004

# YOU MEAN I GET PAID FOR THIS?

**There's only one way to make it in Hollywood and it's starting at the bottom. Here's just a small sample of what happens when you put a \$120,000 film school degree to work.**

A job title in Hollywood with the word *assistant* in it means you're going to be somebody's bitch. It really doesn't matter if the word that follows is producer, agent, editor, or manager—it all implies a career of indentured servitude. Case in point: your boss, the actual producer, is going out of town for the weekend and her Pomeranian "doesn't do well in kennels." Guess who's picking dog shit up off the kitchen floor and developing a hacking cough from newfound allergies? Jean-Claude Van Damme is shooting his next straight-to-video action movie and needs a shipment of AK-47's delivered express to Bulgaria. Guess who's scouring the nether regions of the internet and placing calls to what very well could be terrorist organizations? Needless to say, when interviewing at a prestigious talent agency or movie studio, the magic words guaranteed to prevent you from getting the job are, "I'm in a serious relationship."

"Basically, you don't have to know how to do much to be a P.A.," says former production assistant turned cameraman Eric Jordan. Like many before him, he paid his dues working on various projects until he got the chance to realize the dream of every P.A. the world over: no longer being a P.A.

You might be wondering what exactly a P.A. does before they can go on to bigger and more distinguished jobs. More than anything, the P.A. exists in the entertainment industry to perform the tasks nobody else wants and to be verbally shat upon by anyone listed in the Internet Movie Database. "The producer gets yelled at," says Jordan, "and then he goes home and kicks the dog. But in the case, the P.A. is, well... you get the picture."

"You're kissing so much ass and taking so much shit from clients," assistant agent Aaron Dressler says of his boss, "the P.A. sort of becomes the release for all this built up stress." Physical violence is rare, but verbal abuse comes with the territory. Dressler's boss keeps a megaphone in his office to loudly inform him, and anyone else in the office within earshot, of any major mistakes of faux pas he has committed. "I probably get bull-horned a couple times a week," he says, and when not

used for yelling, his boss has fallen into the habit of ringing a dinner bell into the megaphone whenever he needs Dressler's attention.

Working as an office P.A., the day to day stuff involves exactly what you'd expect, mostly answering telephones and making copies. Adam Clark, a P.A. for the hit television show *24* speaks of his time at the copy machine in a weary, defeated tone, "We have 180 scripts with each episode and it's printed on this paper which can only be copied one sheet at a time. We do revisions every three days or so which means I've come in and spent 12 straight hours copying before, for days on end. I think I worked it out that I spend 24 hours of every week in front of that damn copy machine."

Clark also acts as the first line of defense between the execs he works for and the crazy folk who call in. When *24* wasn't on the air for a season, people phoned in and expected him to have answers. "Why wasn't *24* on the T.V. last night?" was the most common question and, "You don't know shit," or, "You're an asshole" were the two most common insults he got when he didn't have the information people wanted to hear.

Jim Davies, a P.A. for *The Sharon Osbourne Show* dealt with similar call to Clark.

"The toughest part," he says "is listening to these weepy sob-stories over and over and over, then having to delete the e-mail or toss the letter into the trash. I feel like the guy carting the Ark of the Covenant into that great warehouse at the end of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Here I am throwing away people's painful secrets as they hope against hope that daytime T.V. will forgive them, redeem them, and save them. But I'm a P.A. So I do what I'm told, and wait for craft service, and the end of the day."

A production assistant also has little in the way of job security. Expendable by nature, there's the famous P.A. story of the young person put in charge of dropping off the film and sound after a day of shooting on a Tim Allen film. He tells the cab driver to wait for him while he runs in to drop off the sound and when he comes back out a minute later, the cabbie is gone along with the film. Rumors would later circle that the day's shooting had

gone so poorly, the producers told this doomed P.A. to "accidentally" leave the reels of film in the cab. That way, the lost footage would now become the insurance company's problem and not that of the producers. What thanks did this sacrificial lamb of a P.A. receive? Two words, "You're fired."

By now it should be obvious, there are some very clear downsides to being a P.A., but we here at *Law of Inertia* prefer to focus on the positive and realize there is quite possibly no better job in the world for slacking off than an entry level Hollywood position. Sure, if you want to "make it" like some of the people mentioned earlier in eh story, you should probably work hard and kiss a lot of ass, but we like to go by the motto, "With lowly status comes endless possibilities to abuse privileges and get paid for doing jack shit."

So how would I know anything about this? Well, I've had a little experience in the P.A. world myself and I've got a couple stories of my. I racked up a grand total of two days experience as a P.A. on the set of a big budget commercial before I decided to quit and while I realize that's not much, it's probably more than you, and my powers for slacking off truly are impressive.

Let's start with day one. Having no idea what to expect, I show up at some ungodly hour of the morning and am told to start unpacking a truck. After that, I get to be a waiter and take breakfast orders for people the that actually matter. Not too long after that, the director shows up in one of his six Ferraris and the most important order of business for the day is taken care of: setting up the basketball hoop.

I am not a midget, possess decent athletic abilities, and played a little ball in high school which, in the vertically and athletically challenged world of Hollywood, makes me Michael fucking Jordan. The extras look on in awe as I sink a 12 foot jump shot and then drive past the 67 year old director for an easy layup. I have always dreamed of being allowed just one legitimate slam dunk in my life and while I would have loved to cash in on that dream, I am tragically denied by the nine and a half

foot rim.

Busy daydreaming about my imaginary dunk, I fail to notice the rapidly deteriorating mental state of the director after his second defeat upon which he begins tossing the ball directly at my head. His aim is about as bad as his game and soon Kraft services is forced to duck for cover. Finally, another P.A. gives the inevitable whisper in my ear and my team promptly loses the next three games

We break for lunch and not long afterwards I receive my one and only request over the walkie-talkie of the entire day: "Jake, we need you at the basketball court."

Day two of being a P.A. began at an even more unholly hour of the morning and after a couple hours of work, I start hanging around the basketball hoop trying to get in on a game and in the process commit a cardinal sin of being a P.A. - not looking busy.

I never get the chance to play, or talk some shit to the director. Normally I would feel bad for telling a legitimate senior citizen, "You got served," but this guy was a Grade-A asshole.

With basketball out of the picture, I come up with the second most entertaining thing I can think of doing on set, and before I know it, I'm in the golf cart check out office looking over a sheet of safety precautions I have every intention of violating

So why quit you ask? How could I possibly turn down a job where I got \$200 a day to play ball and drive a golf cart around a Universal back lot? The hours. Not that Meryl Streep, Julianne Moore, and Nicole Kidman lez-fest, but the 12, 16, even 20 hour days people are expected to put in. I also much prefer going to sleep at four in the morning instead of waking up to go to work. But who knows, maybe my Hollywood career will continue on in some other form. I hear you can sleep late and still be a paid audience member. Keep an eye out for me in the audience of upcoming episodes of *Ricki Lake*, I'll be the guy blowing kisses and undressing Ricki with my eyes. ☐

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PRELUDE



TRAVIS of PIEBALD's top 10 records to get stoned to...

# KILL YOUR RADIO 1



## JIMI HENDRIX: *AXIS BOLD AS LOVE*

If you want to hear somebody really play the guitar, and I mean really tear it up, then this is a record for you. The album is 13 songs of guitar extravagance. Floating vocals, lush melodies, and of course, lots of solos. The rest of the band that made up The Jimi Hendrix Experience, bassist Noel Redding and drummer Mitch Mitchell, really add their own personal touches as well. Start it from the beginning, sit back, relax, and enjoy. Jimi lives, man. (Reprise: 1967)



## SNOOP DOGG: *DOGGYSTYLE*

You can't get much more weeded than this. Songs about bitches, ho's, weed, the drink, and being a gangsta. Snoop has a very smooth voice that floats over the beats provided by Dr. Dre. I wouldn't go so far as saying Snoop is a modern poet, but he does sound cool as hell, and his mellow voice can get you lifted. Nice female vocal melodies are also placed throughout the record. I am usually more of an East Coast rap fan, but it cannot be denied that this is a stoner classic. (Death Row: 1993)



## THE ROLLING STONES: *BETWEEN THE BUTTONS*

While this isn't as rocking as some other Stones records, they do some interesting experimenting with different instruments, which is always nice for the stoned ear. All in all they are interesting songs with interesting formats. What is really great is that the record sounds like they found new instruments and effects and applied them without learning much about them first. The results are beautifully sloppy. 'Ruby Tuesday' and 'Let's Spend The Night Together' are

the hits on this album, but all the songs are quirky, and together they create an intriguing listen. Mick Jagger even says goodbye to the listener at the end. Nice. (ABKCO: 1967)



## THE BEATLES: *REVOLVER*

There has to be a Beatles album in here, but choosing the best one is always a difficult decision. My final decision is *Revolver*. Crazy sounds and great harmonies are all over this piece of music. All of the songs (with the exception of George Harrison's sitar song) are great listens. Not to diss that one, but it just seems a little fluffy to me, and a good song needs some meat. Anyway, I am not sure what kinds of drugs these gents were on when they were making *Revolver*, but it is great to listen to when you are under the influence of the weed. Hearing the two pianos in "Good Day Sunshine," the guitar licks in "And Your Bird Can Sing," and the spacious soundscape that is "I'm Only Sleeping" just call for the use of the mary jane. Try it for yourself and see. (Capitol: 1966)



## PAVEMENT: *TERIOR TWILIGHT*

If you like Pavement you might be wondering why I chose this album. All of their releases are great and I have found that most Pavement fans favor their older material. However, to me, this is the most lush and beautifully worded record they ever created. I feel as though you can swim in it. There is lots of space to get lost in. Dueling guitars and interesting noises keep the stoners interested throughout the album, plus Stephen Malkmus might even teach you a thing or two. Or maybe I just made that up in my head. (Matador: 1999)



## SPOON: *GIrls CAN TELL*

Again, here is another band that makes many good albums, so it's a difficult choice. *Girls Can Tell* is groovy and loungey without any of the cheese. The singer has a great voice and they really know how to use space to their advantage. I have heard it said that less is often more and in the case of this record I believe it to be true. Many of the songs are piano driven and that is always a nice change from the guitar rock that is most common these days. This is definitely a great record when you are traveling, have a bag, and lots of miles to go before you have to sleep. (Merge: 2001)



## TRIBE CALLED QUEST: *THE LOW END THEORY*

I would say that this is the best rap album ever, but who am I to judge albums? Especially rap albums. In any case, this record is full of great beats, bass lines, and cool melodies. And then there are the rhymes. Q-Tip and Phife Dawg really let the listener have it. It sounds like they really put their hearts and minds into the lyrics of these songs. Sometimes they are serious, sometimes they are edgy, and all the time with an underlying sense of humor. Tribe can both

take and make a joke. (Jive: 1991)



## QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE: *RATED R*

This is the record for the stoner in a bad mood. The Queens create cool soundscapes and songs about drugs, sex, and other less important stuff. This record can convince any good kid to go bad and any bad kid to be worse. The whole record seems to flow together like one piece of music. *Rated R* has both heavy and quiet qualities, and all the songs have their own personality, unlike many records these days. Also, Josh Homme plays the guitar like a champ. *Rated R* is a well crafted stoner masterpiece. (Interscope: 2000)



## THE FLAMING LIPS: *THE SOFT BULLETIN*

The Flaming Lips have been around for years and have made many albums, but *The Soft Bulletin* is a piece of musical art. I have heard that it took the band over two years to record this album, and let me tell you, it was worth every minute. You can't really argue with an album that makes good use of harps and other classical instruments. The best part is that every time you listen, you hear something that you haven't heard before. *Yoshimi Versus The Pink Robots* is also a great stoner record, but *The Soft*

*Bulletin* was the beginning of the Lips trying to achieve something new musically. (Pias America: 1999)



## DAVID BOWIE: *ZIGGY STARDUST*

This theme album can keep you rocking for hours after it is over. The acoustic guitar that shows up in many of the songs sounds big and ferocious. Pianos, electric guitars, drums, and some saxophones help to create this mighty fine record about the rise and fall of a rocker named, you guessed it, Ziggy Stardust. These are just good rock songs that were recorded in an interesting manner. They will bring a tingle to your ear and make you want to shake your hips. Every stoner likes dancing, right? (Virgin: 1972)



BRANDON of CHRISTIANSEN's top 10 favorite records...

# KILL YOUR RADIO<sub>2</sub>



## YES: FRAGILE

This is one of the few records that changed my life, and one of the best bands ever. They have the biggest riffs, the best keyboards, and the most powerful drums. These guys had to smoke a lot of pot. It's powerful, yet soft and smooth. The singing and lyrics are seductive. Everything is seductive. I highly recommend this record to anyone who's ready for real music. If you like The Mars Volta, you haven't heard nothing yet. Rick Wakeman, the

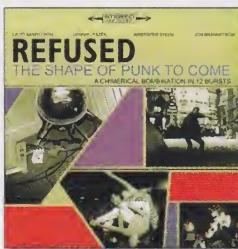
keyboardist, brings a whole new dimension of sonic composition to this record. *Fragile* is a definitive record for all music lovers. (Atlantic: 1972)



## RADIOHEAD: OK COMPUTER

A self explanatory one. I think this is the best Radiohead album because it captures the distorted rock guitars from *The Bends*, and the electronica of their most recent work. "Airbag" is the first song. On the third note one of the guitarists hits a harmonic that gives me goosebumps every time. The slow jams are quite poignant as well. One of my ex-girlfriends, she was a freak, and the relationship wasn't that healthy, but I always remember her

bedroom was surrounded with pink Christmas tree lights, and us listening to this record. She didn't have heat, and it was late December, so we'd pile under her blankets and fall asleep to it. I really don't have to explain why this is a good record, most people already understand. (Capitol: 1997)



## REFUSED: THE SHAPE OF PUNK TO COME

This is some of the best songwriting ever. Each song has distinct guitar riffs that never leave your head. Dennis can scream like a banshee. Plus, his lyrics are some of the most influential ones that have come out of the hardcore scene, like, "Good frames can't save bad paintings." A fusion of hardcore, jazz, and electronica that perpetually rocks my brain every time I listen to it. Not only are the songs incredible, but the sound quality is sonically superlative. I don't

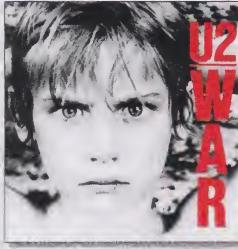
think I have ever heard a better recording than the way that this record sounds. Even the video for "New Noise" is badass. (Epitaph: 1998)



## LED ZEPPELIN: III

Every Led Zeppelin album is great. Well, maybe not every album. I sort of lose interest around *Coda*, but anyway, *III* takes the cake as the best because of the two slow jams that are placed consecutively on this record. I'm talking about "Tangerine" and "That's The Way." Acutally, to be brutally honest, the first time I heard "That's The Way" was when I saw the movie *Almost Famous*. The song enters the film as Stillwater's bus heads towards the sunset in

the desert. I think the imagery on top of that song almost made me cry. Now I'm emotionally attached to that song because of Cameron Crowe. That is beside the point. They say the third time's a charm. (Atlantic: 1972)



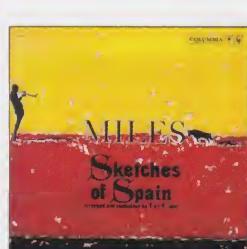
## U2: WAR

We're all familiar with "Sunday Bloody Sunday" and "New Year's Day," but have you heard the rest of this record? The songs are suave. Bono's voice rings true on top of the grooving bass lines and dissonant guitars. In "Refugee," there is a powerful African percussion breakdown that makes me want to trade in my guitar for some bongos and a headset microphone, just like Phil Collins. Seriously though, every song on this album should've been on their Best Of compilations. (Island: 1983)



## JEFF BUCKLEY: GRACE

Hands down the best vocalist ever. The first track, "Mojo Pin," is so powerful because of the dueling dynamics that occur throughout the song. It starts off so soft and works into an almost hardcore riffage. His vocals hold no bounds. He can hold these high pitched screams for minutes without ever taking a breath. There are slow jams, there are fast jams. His rendition of Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah" is easily one of the best covers I have ever heard. I feel bad for Cohen because Buckley usurped him big time. Don't you hate it when that happens? It's like when that band Alien Ant Farm covered Michael Jackson's "Smooth Criminal." (Columbia: 1994)



## MILES DAVIS: SKETCHES OF SPAIN

The first time I heard this record, I could've sworn that I had heard it somewhere else, maybe in a previous life. Was it used for a soundtrack in a movie? It certainly sounds like a soundtrack for something, oh yeah, how about my life? Perfect. This record does the best job of representing undertones and sounds that must be closely scrutinized. Headphones do the best justice. If you listen closely, throughout most of the songs, there are castanets and all sorts of minuscule percussion devices ringing out in the background of Davis' mind-altering horn playing. This record puts me in a meditative trance. I've become dependent on it to end each day as I fall asleep. (Columbia: 1959)



## JAY-Z: THE BLACK ALBUM

Even though this is a recent release, I must add it to the list. I'm a sucker for a good hip hop beat, and this record is jam-packed with some of the best. Jay-Z declares it: "Best Rapper Alive," and he's not being pompous. He's being honest. His lyrics steer from the subject of guns and money into more realistic situations. Fathers that leave the family, poverty, perseverance; these are the issues that Hova brings to the forefront, and he does it with style. "Dust Your Shoulders Off," and "99 Problems" have the best beats ever. This record puts me in the best mood. What more can I say? (Rocafella/Def Jam: 2003)



## SMASHING PUMPKINS: SIAMESE DREAM

This classic was the first compact disc that I ever owned. The guitar sounds on this record have a distinct way of saying "yeah, we rock." Billy Corgan and his screechy, androgynous voice push hand in hand with the music as it hits riveting peaks ("Rocket") and dreamlike ballads ("Spaceboy") that encapsulate a solid rock record. This is a paragon of early '90's alternative that will transcend time and space for decades to come. I know a guy who used to carry this record around in his pocket, and when conversations were lacking, he would put it on the stereo wherever he was and have a listening party. I think everyone should do that. (Virgin: 1993)



## RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE: EVIL EMPIRE

There should be a genre called "marathon music," because whenever I listen to this record, I feel like I could run the Boston marathon and win the bitch. "Gotta turn the bass up on this one," says singer Zach De La Rocha. I feel energized just thinking about it. Rage are a huge influence on me in terms of lyrical content and the intensity at which De La Rocha delivers his mind-opening lyrics. His voice never dissipates, its rage (for lack of a better word) reaches inside each and every listener with pure honesty and emotion. Plus, the guitar riffs and drumming keep the tempo jumping back and forth from rock part to breakdown. *Evil Empire* is a hardcore eargasm that instills rhythmic rapping with rocking guitars to create the powerhouse of all rock records. (Epic: 1996)



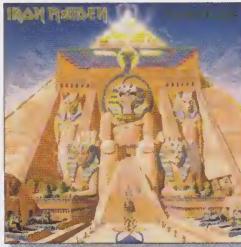
JON of RUFIO's top 10 records of all time...

# KILL YOUR RADIO<sub>3</sub>



## SOILWORK: A PREDATOR'S PORTRAIT

You'll have a headache after listening to this record because you won't be able to stop banging your head. Of course, like any good metal head, that's a good thing, due in no small part to the amazing guitar work and intense drumming. It's mostly a fast record, but they slow down the tempo every once in a while just to prove they can destroy you at a slower pace. Track two, "Like The Average Stalker," is a prime example of this. It's probably one of the best songs on the CD, next to track six, "Grand Failure Anthem." The slide riff towards the end of the song is an audio orgasm. (Nuclear Blast: 2001)



## IRON MAIDEN: POWERSLAVE

Maiden rules, the gallop beat rules, this record rules. Buy this record! (EMI: 1984)



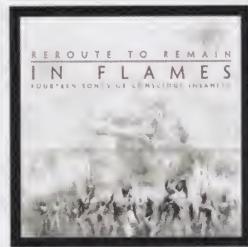
## KILLSWITCH ENGAGE: ALIVE OR JUST BREATHING

To sum this record up in one word, it would be "scrumptuous!" This record makes me want to stab someone with a shoe! It's non-stop hardcore metal, with some half-time beats that act as breakdowns, tons of energy, killer riffs, and great vocals. When listening to the record I always find myself banging my head to the beat and remembering why I got into heavy music in the first place. Amazing. (Roadrunner: 2002)



## RACER X: SECOND HEAT

All I really have to say is Paul Gilbert is a god. Anyone who thinks they are getting the real Paul Gilbert from listening to Mr. Big is very wrong by the way. The Racer X stuff was not about songs, melody, or radio hits. It was about nothing but sick guitar ripping and making anyone else who plays guitar have their confidence crushed. This guy has like 28 fingers. It's the only reasonable explanation I can think of for how fast he plays guitar. In fact, Racer X almost didn't make the list cause you find yourself studying the guitars more than you do smashing your skull against your steering wheel. But that would never happen. I would gladly let Paul Gilbert stab me in the face with his guitar in hopes that it might make me a little smarter. (Shrapnel: 1987)



## IN FLAMES: REROUTE TO REMAIN

"Please punch me in my face because I've just been rocked!" That's what I said after first listening to this CD. *Reroute To Remain* is packed with tons of sick riffs and alternate picking, lots of breakdowns, blasting, and harmonizing. All this together makes for a killer record. It's great to listen to if you feel like screaming and head banging. But please, bang responsibly. Don't bang and drive. (Nuclear Blast: 2002)



## TOOL: AEENEMA

This is my favorite Tool record, and it delivers some of the best slow-bangs ever. A "slow bang" is very similar to the "fierce bob" mentioned during RATM, and often the two are mistaken to be the same. But with the slow bang there's a little more whip involved with the neck, as well as a longer bang motion, which creates the "slow" sensation of the bang. Tool does a great job at getting you to flop your head around. They're the best band in the world at creating eerie melodies that swallow you up and spit you out a millisecond later when the song turns on a dime. (Volcano: 1996)



## RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE: EVIL EMPIRE

One can't help but to not bob their head when listening to this CD, let alone any of RATM's records. "Snakecharmer," "Revolver," "Tire Me," and "Roll Right," are among some of the greatest tracks here. Rage is not necessarily a head banging band, but more like a fierce bob. Everyone should already own this record, because if not, you're going to rock and roll hell where you'll spend all of eternity bow-hunting with Ted Nugent. (Epic: 1996)



## SLAYER: REIGN IN BLOOD

Fast as shit metal is the only way to describe this record, my favorite from Slayer. Kerry King and Co. definitely slay on this record. If you're in the mood for uncontrollable head spasms then this is the album for you! I recommend tracks one and ten, "Angel of Death," and the classic thrash-metal anthem, "Raining Blood." For those of you who are new to Slayer, the urge to sacrifice babies will pass after a few weeks. After that you'll just be a fan for life. (Universal: 1986)



## REFUSED: THE SHAPE OF PUNK TO COME

It's a known fact that while listening to this record, violent involuntary convulsions are a common side-effect, so proceed with caution. Recommended for ages 13 and up. This is such a brilliant collection of songs, where every track has its own flair and style. It really is genius. Definitely a must have for any one who likes to scream at the top of their lungs while in the privacy of their own car. Once again, be responsible and don't bang and drive. (Epitaph: 1998)



## METALLICA: MASTER OF PUPPETS

A classic metal album that delivers some amazing banger action. Nobody can argue that Metallica invented the style of metal that makes you want to smash your skull against a wall. They did it better than anyone else and *Master of Puppets* is Metallica in their prime. This record is the headbanger's bible. Every track on this album kills. For those of you who are brave enough to go all the way on this record and listen to it 50 times a day like I used to, be prepared for a serious "bang-over" the next morning. Not to be taken lightly. (Elektra: 1986)



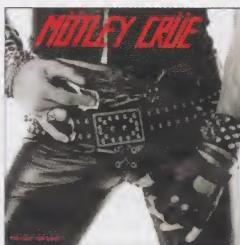
DAVE of RYE COALITION's top 10 records that made him

# KILL YOUR RADIO 4



## GUNS N' ROSES: APPETITE FOR DESTRUCTION

My friend Vincenzo Fiermonte made me a tape of this once. It had all the songs on side one and then on side two it had "Rocket Queen" and then selected Beastie Boy and LL Cool J tracks. I played this tape to death that year. It totally opened my eyes to what music could really be. I was all of 11 years old, but when I heard "Welcome To The Jungle" the first time, I knew this was something special. I remember hearing the rumors that Axl was having his way with a girl at the end of "Rocket Queen." That was so bad ass. I heard recently it wasn't true, but I've heard other stories that these dudes were the real deal. My grandmother used to always sing "you're fuckin' crazy" over and over. No lie. (Geffen: 1987)



## MOTLEY CRÜE: TOO FAST FOR LOVE

I remember Joe Knipp, one of my brother's metal friends, used to come over our house wearing Crüe headbands, cut off gloves, T-shirts, the whole nine yards. He was seriously into Crüe. One day while I was playing wiffle ball with Vincenzo, we actually got to hear some Crüe, and it was awesome! There was something about them that just made me an instant fan. So now I have GN'R and The Crüe! To this day, this record contains the greatest cowbell sound ever recorded in the history of the record business. I dare you to try and find a better sounding cowbell. "Mississippi Queen" by Mountain, comes close, and so does "Don't Fear the Reaper" by Blue Oyster Cult, but no cigar. I never liked much other hair metal, I just like my three bands and that's it. (Elektra: 1981)



## MOTLEY CRÜE: SHOUT AT THE DEVIL

I got this album shortly after *Too Fast For Love*. I remember listening to this when I would get pissed at my parents or be bummed that no girls liked me. I was chubby with a mullet and my jean jacket that had Crüe and GN'R patches on it (because my grandma sewed them on there, bitch). Then I would pop my copy of *Shout At The Devil* in my big ass Sanyo Walkman that took like six batteries and listen to songs like "Danger," "Red Hot," and "Too Young to Fall in Love." For me it should have been changed to "Too Fat To Fall In Love." I would listen and walk in the rain and think I was a bad ass. I have listened to these three albums more than any others in my life. I don't need those other shitty bands I have GN'R and The Crüe! (Elektra: 1983)



## LED ZEPPELIN: IV

This one is my mom's fault. She would always put this on when we were going down the shore (that's "to the beach" for you non New Jersey residents) and play some mean ass air drums. She knew every drum hit. It was insane. I was young, but there was always a large Zeppelin presence in my life (no pun intended). My parents were huge music fans, so I was always surrounded by music, but Zeppelin just sounded cooler. They were so young when they made this album too, like 19. You find me four 19 year-olds that can play like this. I think about what I was doing at 19 and it makes me cry. These dudes were making fucking history. Jon Gonnelli, our guitar player, once kicked a date out of his car after he put on Zeppelin and she complained how she thought they were annoying. That fuckin' rules! (Atlantic: 1969)



## BORN AGAINST: NINE PATRIOTIC HYMNS

This was my freshman year of high school. I was older when this came out, but that was the first time I had ever seen real live punk music. ABC NO RIO: shit-hole, yes, but I have seen some great shows there! When I saw Born Against and Rorschach it was like a whole new world of music that wasn't all glam and celebrity. You could be a normal person in a t-shirt and jeans and be in a band like these dudes. From that day on I was like "Fuck yeah, I can do that too!!" These two bands were so awesome. If you've never seen or heard them, do your self a favor find a video or a CD on Ebay. Their album and singles are the best. (Vermiform: 1991)



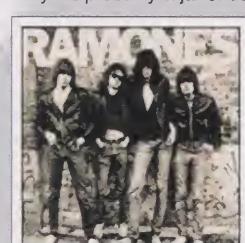
## WHITESNAKE: S/T

I won this at the boardwalk in Wildwood, NJ. Still my number one vacation spot in the world! If you've never been there, look it up and go. Your life will be better because of it. They have little stands where you plop down a quarter on a name or color or number, and if the little wheel lands on your number you win a tape. Thanks to the name "POP" I won Whitesnake. I used to sit by the pool at my hotel and be all like "I'm cool, I'm listening to Whitesnake," and to me, I was cool. At that age I couldn't tell that they were a complete Zep rip off. Is that a bad thing? I wish there were more Zep rip offs. This world would be a much better place. How cool would it be if every band that ripped off Green Day, instead ripped off Zeppelin. I can dream can't I? (Geffen: 1987)



## VAN HALEN: 1984

My brother won this, but he chose vinyl. Being four years older, he got to rock the turntable. I didn't. I was seven when this came out and was totally floored. My brother used to play it all day. He would set up Tupperware and hit them with wooden salad spoons until the ends broke off and my mom would be pissed as hell. I always wanted to be the drummer, but had zero rhythm. My bro, on the other hand, was just like Alex Van Halen. Christmas came and he got a guitar. It was a hybrid of a Flying V and the red Eddie Van Halen guitar. That thing rules! So does this album. You know those little bastards that got to play Van Halen in grade school thought they were so fuckin cool (with the exception of young Michael Anthony). They are probably in jail or dead or strung out now. (Warner: 1984)



## RAMONES: S/T

This began my obsession with punk. I got this Ramones tape in eighth grade, and decided I wanted to be like Dee Dee or Sid Vicious. My parents bought me this shitty left-handed bass that had a hockey stick head stock and was made by Crate Amplifiers. I had to get this one because nice lefty guitars are really expensive. Everyday I would put this Ramones album on and turn the balance to the left (I think it's the left) so that it would just be bass, drums, and vocals. I played these songs until my hands bled. Yeah! (Sire: 1976)



## MICHAEL JACKSON: THRILLER

I was young when I got into this, but I really got into it. The second you hear the drums in "Billie Jean" you know what time it is. Too bad he is, as my grandmother and Axl said, "fuckin' crazy." My mom bought me the "Beat It" jacket and I wore it to school thinking I was gonna be all fresh and then everyone had the same jacket. I also lost points because my mom bought me the black version instead of the orange version that was featured in the video. My shit was bootleg. What do you expect being a kid in Jersey City? I got my first dose of live performance when my mom would make me wear the coat, the t-shirt with the piano across it, and the silly sparkle glove, and act out the videos for my relatives who would laugh hysterically at me. I was a tubby bitch. (Epic: 1982)



## RORSCHACH: AUTOPSY

Rorschach was a brutal NJ hardcore metal band, but they were much more than that. They were too good to be playing shitty clubs, they should have been huge. I thought their singer looked like Ron Jeremy. I used to listen to them at night before I went to bed. I always fell asleep before the third song. One day I put the album on in the daytime and had subliminally learned all their songs! I still listen to them when I feel stressed out and need to air drum like a nerd. They should have gone down in history with the likes of Slayer; they were that good! I got to go on tour with them when I was 15. It was Rorschach, Assuck, and Merel. That was one of the most fun times in my life. After the tour was over they dropped me off at school after driving all night. I slept in every class. (Gern Blandsten: 1995)

# VIDEO GAME REVIEWS



## ESPN MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL

Spell it with me, M-E-D-I-O-C-R-E. Mediocre. How else can I describe this game? Let's see... Uninspired, dull, boring, and nothin' special. Going up against an EA sports game is like playing the Yankees or the Lakers, they just have too much money and talent on their side to make things fair. Take ESPN Baseball for instance, there's nothing terrible about the game, but when you compare it to the enjoyable and imaginative MVP Baseball it doesn't even come close. Maybe they were trying to do something special with the new "First Person Baseball" feature, but it has to be one of the most retarded ideas in the history of gaming. Spell it with me again, W-H-Y. Why did Sega include the first person baseball? Why is there some crappy contest called "The Duel" hosted by the most annoying announcer of all time instead of a good old fashioned Home Run Derby? Why does every player in the game

- have such an enormous crotch (not that I would look at that kind of thing)? And why would you buy this game when MVP Baseball is already out there?

Jake Futerick

(Sega/ESPN Videogames: Xbox, PS2)



## MLB BASEBALL 2005

989 Sports put out its 2005 version of MLB Baseball and I will start out by saying that it blew donkey pecker. I thought I was all cool getting a game that says 2005 on it when really, it could have been a game for Super Nintendo. Needless to say I was disappointed, but let me try and say some good things about the game before I bash it too hard. The game offers every major league team already equipped with their up to date rosters. The game has the option for voice activated commands. How in the fuck does that shit work? Who knows? But it sounds cool. You can also put old school players such as Ty Cobb, Reggie Jackson, and Satchel Paige in this game. It also has the option to play others from all over with the use of the wonderful world wide internet, but this is nothing new. I was most anxious to play the homerun derby option, but it sucked. No crazy camera angles and the commentators are annoying as shit! Also, in one round I hit 37 homeruns with Jim Thome. What a challenge let me tell you! This game just plain sucks. Playing it will give you a headache. Thanks for reading my friends and keep up with the finger exercises, it will greatly increase your skill and chances for winning!

Matt Sileno

(989 Sports: PS2)



## EA MVP BASEBALL 2004

I've been playing video game baseball for the better part of 15 years now, and I can say with some certainty this is the best one I've ever played. The game play is simply phenomenal. In typical EA Sports fashion, the user controls every aspect of the game, including a speed and accuracy meter for every pitch your pitcher throws. The dynasty mode allows you to control a team's entire organization, from the lowly ranks of the Double A minor league teams all the way to your favorite big league club. Not happy with the way your superstar is performing? Send him down to the minor leagues for the week and see if he responds. Take over the Yankees and buy up all the high priced talent to be sure the Red Sox won't even sniff the postseason. And when Pedro goes head hunting you can actually charge the mound and start a bench-clearing brawl (Don Zimmer not included). On a downside, there's no Barry Bonds because apparently he isn't making enough money and you'll have to trade for A-Rod because the rosters are only up to date as of January 2004. All in all though, you will not find a better baseball game.

Chris Norton

(EA Sports: Xbox, PS2, GameCube, PC)



## BACKYARD BASEBALL

Little league baseball. Ahh, those were the days. Your team kinda sucked and games were either utter blowouts, or called a tie after ten innings because everyone's dad got drunk and bored. Sure, it was fun at the time for those "good at sports," but in retrospect there wasn't much I liked about little league. So for God's sake, why create a video game that cartoonishly allows you to relive the experience? I simply could not get stoned enough to enjoy this game. In fact, playing one game lulled my competitor into a coma from which he has yet to awaken. I would rather have an icepick repeatedly jabbed into my scrotum than play this game ever again.

John Streit

(Atari: PS2)



old school classic

## TOMMY LASORDA BASEBALL

Are you tired of overly complicated baseball games that take 11 buttons just to throw a pitch? Then you should try tracking down a copy of Tommy Lasorda Baseball, the bare bones Sega Genesis classic in which simplicity ruled. True, there was only one ballpark to choose from (a watered down version of Dodger Stadium) and the game featured zero major league players, but the fact you could hit a mile-high bomb into the parking lot made up for any shortcomings. Dodger fan or not, this game rocks!

Noel Shankel

(Sega Genesis)

# VIDEO GAME REVIEWS



## NINJA GAIDEN

Perhaps you remember Ninja Gaiden from its days as a two-player arcade game back in '88. Maybe the old-school Nintendo version which came out the following year rings a bell. Aside from the whole "being a ninja part," this current incarnation is completely different from its predecessors. The story is simple, some important sword is stolen and you want it back. I still haven't been able to figure out why you go from fighting other ninjas, to gun-wielding soldiers, to the living dead, but that's not important. The important thing is that Ninja Gaiden is a hard fucking game. You will waste hours trying to figure out why the enemies keep killing you, and how to master moving about, which often requires jumping long distances by running along and bouncing off walls. None of the enemies are predictable and they often come in groups, which keeps you on edge. Fortunately the game rewards you with some crazy looking combos that result in blood gushing from your eviscerated, and often times decapitated foes, a la *Kill Bill*. In the end, the harder parts of this game will test your anger management skills but it's the challenge that makes this game fun.

Gabe Handford  
(Tecmo: Xbox)



## MX UNLEASHED

MX Unleashed is the latest in a series of solid motocross games featuring both freestyle and racing modes. In the freestyle mode, you drive around finding ramps and hills that will give you giant air so you can do tricks like the Fish Wrap, Monkey Bar, and Superman Seat Grab, earning style points along the way. When you crash, you'll make a short grunting noise and your body and limbs will bounce and flail around lifelessly. After a while you'll get bored of doing stunts and you'll just start trying to find new ways to impale yourself on rocks, trees and other sharp objects. The racing consists of lap-based outdoor and indoor tracks. You'll learn various techniques such as using your suspension to get more air off jumps and using the clutch to gain speed around corners, giving the game an authentic feel. Even if you're not into the whole motocross thing, the best part, of course, is racing against your buddies and shit-talking when you beat them.

Gabe Handford  
(THQ/Rainbow Studios: Xbox, PS2)



## 007 EVERYTHING OR NOTHING

Why is it that the only thing people think of when they think of Pierce Brosnan is his portrayal of James Bond? First off, he can't hold even one explosive cufflink to Sean Connery and two, his best acting was in the short lived and quickly forgotten '80's TV series *Remington Steele*. Despite many angry and tear stained letters, I doubt I'll ever get to play my favorite detective in video game format and must settle instead on playing "The Broz" in his most famous incarnation. EA's new installment in the 007 series, Everything or Nothing gives you just this opportunity. What's more is you get to bring down a crimeboss played by one of Hollywood's creepiest stars, Willem Dafoe. The gameplay is on par with some of the best of third-person shoot-'em-ups and includes sequences where you drive the Porsche Cayenne fully-equipped with heat seeking missiles. In this humble reviewers opinion, this is one of the best games in the genre, ever.

John Streit  
(EA Games: Xbox, PS2, GameCube)



## BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM

Listen up maggots! Battlefield Vietnam is here for the PC and looks like you got two options. Either tuck your dick between your legs and head to Canada, or pick up your trusty M16 and start huntin' Charlie. But perhaps your sensibilities lean a little more to the left. Well then Comrade, Didi Mao! Pick up that Kashlikov and throw out the round eye imperialist invaders. Battlefield Vietnam is a massive online multiplayer game, meaning you and up to 63 other virgins will be duking it out over the Internet for control of the Mekong Delta. Battlefield allows you to play as either the good old US of A or the commie loving Vietnamese. U.S. forces possess superior firepower and the ability to rain down napalm like the gods of war while the Vietnamese arsenal encourages stealth and sabotage. As an NVA you can place dung covered punji stakes that kill instantly, or booby trap U.S. choppers and watch them blow as some sucker attempts to take off. While you can't go water skiing off the back of a PBR like they did in *Apocalypse Now*, there are numerous vehicles for players to go tearing through the shit blasting some old school rock and roll jams. So do yourself a favor pick up the game and start running wet opps out of Laos today.

Adam Gorczyca  
(EA Games: PC)



## MIDWAY ARCADE TREASURES

Handling the video game reviews for this magazine, I tend to play a lot of video games, and after a while I can get a little burned out on the same old first person shooters, racing, sports, and role playing games. So with Midway Arcade Treasures I decided to take it back to the day when I would ride my skateboard to the local arcade and blow my weekly allowance on a few hours of fun. There's a bunch of classics on this disk like Rampage, Spy Hunter, Gauntlet, and my personal favorite, Smash TV. If you're not familiar, imagine Robotron 2084 mixed with the movie *Running Man* with the violence meter turned up to "Ultra." For me, Smash TV alone was worth the \$20 price tag and playing it was the most fun I've had with my PS2 in a while. With so many classics on one disk, I'm sure you can find your joint from back in the day as well.

Jake Futernick  
(Midway: Xbox, PS2, GameCube)

# DVD REVIEWS

## Iggy & The Stooges Live in Detroit

**(Creem)**- Here they are, the legendary Stooges: Iggy Pop, Ron Asheton and Scott Asheton, in full chaotic primal glory. I saw one of the shows on this tour and the pure energy coming out of these guys is still amazingly powerful 30 long years after the band imploded and permanently crashed their way into rock and roll history. The night of this particular show is a testament to that history—a grand and long-awaited homecoming blowout in the city where it all started: Detroit, Michigan. "Welcome Fuckin' Home!" Iggy screams at the crowd who are then treated to a set that includes every single song from the band's first two albums, and a couple of new tunes for good measure. This was a reunion of the original, first incarnation of The Stooges, before they reformed with James Williamson in '72 for the *Raw Power* album; this is why any songs after *Funhouse* are totally missing from the set. Would an encore of "Search And Destroy" or "I Got A Right" have been too much to ask for? Mike Watt fills in on bass for the deceased Dave Alexander and the tight set showcases a solid rock and roll band. Iggy Pop is so excited that he can't stop screaming, "These are the fuckin' Stooges! I fuckin' love you!" throughout the entire show. Iggy is over 56 years old and he still manages to lead the band like a 23 year-old lunatic,

straight through to the second encore of "I Wanna Be Your Dog." The Stooges definitely still have it, and it's all compiled on this marvelous DVD for you to witness and see what a real band should sound like. This DVD also marks the return of another rock staple, *Creem Magazine*! **The Turk**

## The New England Metal & Hardcore Festival 2003 (Trustkill)

In theory, hardcore festivals always seem like a great idea. Wow, you mean I get to see all my favorite bands on the same night under the same roof? Wow, there will be some big metal bands there too? Thanks, but I'll pass. This DVD does a great job of keeping the myth alive, but the hardcore festival as an exciting concept is just a myth. Typically, it's a long day where all the bands start to sound the same and after a few hours you and everyone you came with will be completely zoned out. Thankfully we have this DVD to re-live the New England Metal Fest without even having to stand in line for a portapotty. There are a few standout performances on this DVD. In an ironic twist of fate, the best performance is from Converge who, due to contractual obligations were almost cut from the final version. Thankfully, Converge and the good people at Trustkill managed to save their footage. The same can't be said for Atreyu or

Darkest Hour, both of whom were cut from the retail release of this DVD. In summary: hardcore festivals are agonizingly long and monotonous, if some of the best bands at the festival won't even be making it to the final version of the DVD then the DVD suffers, and watching a concert in your living room when your brother wants to play video games and your dad wants to watch football just isn't fun. Ok, class adjourned. **Shane Gill**

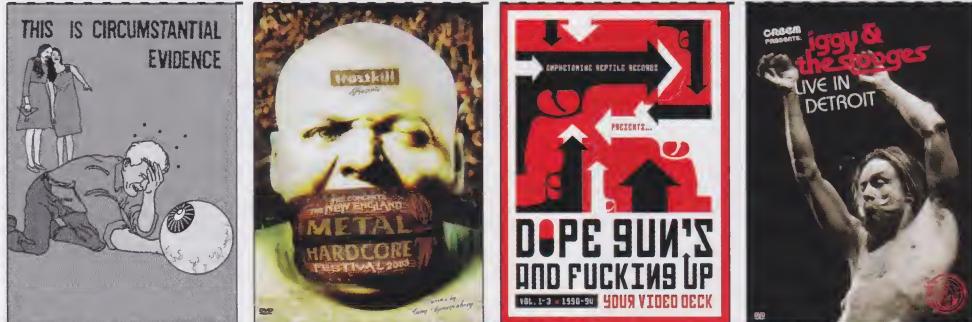
## Dope Guns And Fucking Up Your Video Deck Vol. 1-3: 1990-1994 (Amphetamine Reptile)

In the late '80's and early '90's Amphetamine Reptile served as the lifeline for underground, cutting edge music. While major record labels were jerking off all over L.A. hair bands like Ratt and Poison, AmRep was churning out music from such bands as Helmet, Boss Hog, and Surgery. This collection of videos was originally released as a multi volume VHS series and features live footage and videos from over 30 bands. In addition to choice video cuts from Helmet, Unsane, the Melvins, and Today Is The Day, each volume is narrated by Minneapolis TV Personality, Dr. Sphincter. The bad news is that you are forced to witness Sphincter's unamusing and terribly outdated satire. The good news is that this DVD is filled with

rare and classic videos like "Hitting the Wall" from The Cows and "Honey Bucket" from The Melvins. Typically, these were the type of videos that MTV, tossed in the trash, forcing you to scavenge through late night public access shows in hopes of catching your favorite band. Pass on the *School Of Rock* DVD and file this in your video library instead.

## The Goon

**This is Circumstantial Evidence DVD (Three.One.G)**- This DVD is awesome! *This Is Circumstantial Evidence* chronicles the mix of grindcore and dance music that is so prevalent in today's punk culture. Combining the talents of several video/photographers, the film showcases the explosive performances of the Blood Brothers, Orthrelm, The Locust, and others. The sound and picture quality are not top-notch; this DVD is more about capturing the energy of subculture performers in their finest form: packed basements and tight clubs. The angles and color manipulations lend not only to performances, but also to the disc's artistic merit. As you'll see from Jenny Piccolo and Moving Units shows, what threads dance and grind together are the genres overwhelming demand on its drummers. This Is Circumstantial Evidence captures all this and more. **Stephen Blackwell**



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!!! / OUT HUD  
Lab Remix Series Vol. 2 EP  
(GSL/Zum)

This split EP is a re-issue of the out-of-print GSL/Zum vinyl-only release from 1999. !!! and Out Hud are both touted as being "dance" and "experimental," but neither of those terms seem to fit. !!! is at least somewhat funky but the single song they contribute to this EP is nearly 12 minutes long. Who wants to dance to the same monotonous groove for 12 minutes (other than ravers, of course)? The same goes for Out Hud who could be called experimental only due to the fact that they include three versions of the same song. Out of nearly 20 minutes worth white-boy hipster funk, only about seven minutes are even listenable while the rest of it is simply redundant. Regardless, !!! and Out Hud have had several good releases in the past so check out some of those, and then if you're hooked you may want this EP. **Chris Rager**



THE ACADEMY  
self-titled EP  
(LLR)

This must be the same academy that Taking Back Sunday, Brand New, Hot Rod Circuit, and every other emo band attended, because they are exactly what this EP sounds like. Stereotypical melodic guitars and whiney vocals carry the entire album, and make me have flashbacks to two years ago when those bands were in heavy rotation in my stereo. Unfortunately, rather than giving it a chance, all this EP made me want to do was listen to my old CDs. **Matt Neatock**



ALKALINE TRIO / ONE MAN ARMY  
BYO Split Series Vol. 5  
(BYO)

No poetry or clever word-play is needed to describe this disc—it fucking rocks. On the fifth CD in BYO's split series, Alkaline Trio and One Man Army bring out the big guns and their best songs and leave listeners wanting more. The happy-go-lucky kings of gloom and doom, Alkaline Trio rock their signature style while serving up more ballads than usual—Matt Skiba must be in love. Their rendition of The Damned's "Wait For The Blackout" is top-notch, and is the icing on the cake of their half-dozen tracks. Meanwhile, San Francisco's street punk icons, One Man Army, drop their best recording to date. These cool, ultra-catchy ditties bring to mind bands like The Undertones and Buzzcocks, and that is never a bad thing. This entire disc is a reminder that punk can still be a fun, beautiful thing. **Jennifer Nobles**



ANTERRABAE  
Shakedown Tonight  
(Triple Crown)

As of late, Long Island has produced their fair share of bands that cover the spectrum from pop-punk to visceral hardcore. With the glut of music coming from the area and the attention being paid by record labels, it usually leads to an inundation of bands imitating each other with no shame. In Anterrabae's case they have taken the blueprint that has been laid out before them from an older generation of Long Island hardcore bands like Vision Of Disorder and From Autumn To Ashes and improved on it. Playing like their lives depend on it, Anterrabae makes a very good hardcore record filled

with breakdowns that are not forced and melody that enhances the songs instead of cheapening them. This is one great record. It makes perfect sense that a new generation of L.I. bands would be on the rise, I just did not expect it to be so soon. **Ray Harkins**



ANTIDOTE  
Thou Shalt Not Kill EP  
(Hell Bent)

Another classic New York hardcore re-issue. This time it's Antidote, the seminal band that included ex-members of The Misfits (drummer Arthur Googy played on *Walk Among Us*, an undisputed classic!) as well as John Joseph of the Cro-Mags. Up until now this has been—like most Misfits related projects—hard-as-shit to find and only available on vinyl. Eight short blasts of sloppy yet melodic hardcore-punk is what you get. There's not much in the way of bonus tracks, but John Joseph provides some informative liner notes, and all the original artwork is carefully reproduced. Pick it up and stop scouring Ebay; you're not going to find the seven-inch for less the \$300 anyways! **Aaron Lefkove**



APERS  
Singles And Outtakes: 1997-2002  
(Stardumb)

The Apers are from the Netherlands, and they got their name because they like to ape the Ramones. Wait, keep reading! That's a good thing, I swear! You love The Queers and Groovie Ghoulies, don't you? Well, think of the Apers as their fury and cuddly European counterparts. Ramones-dumb, three-chord punk rock songs slowly evolve into some absolutely charming power-pop towards the second half of the CD. Songs like "Beat You Up" hold their own next to their cover of the Undertones' "Here Comes The Summer," and that's no easy feat! Remember that shitty pop-punk band you and everybody else had in high school? The Apers are way better than that, and they put all those cheesy love songs you tried to write to shame. There's even a flyer in the CD booklet that has the Apers headlining the "Crass Sucks Punk Rock Party" with another band called Retarded! Europe sounds so fun, doesn't it? **The Turk**



ATOMBOMBPOCKET-KNIFE  
Lack And Pattern  
(File-13)

More often than not, bands who are truly awesome live fall flat on their recorded material. Coheed & Cambria, Every Time I Die, and Mogwai immediately come to mind. They simply cannot find the same energy and excitement when in the studio that surrounds their music every time they hit the stage. Chicago's Atombombpocketknife have the opposite problem: this record is fantastic, while the band is a dissonant, pretentious mess on stage. It could be that weeks of touring took their toll both times I saw this band live, but their blend of post-rock, a la 90 Day Men or newer Fugazi, sounds simply uninspired and uncrafted in a live setting. This CD, however, is moody, dark, groovy, and brooding enough to find a nice home in the back catalog of Southern or Touch And Go Records. This CD is recommended for fans of the more rocking stuff coming out of Chicago's hipster districts, but just be sure to make it a Blockbuster night when ABPK comes to town. **Ross Siegel**



ATOM & HIS PACKAGE  
Hair: Debatable  
(Hopeless)

On August 29, 2003, Adam Goren and his Yamaha QY700 music sequencer—more fondly known as Atom & His Package—played for the last time at the First Unitarian Church in Philadelphia. This memorable night, at Philly's underground music mecca, is captured in full on the CD/DVD release of *Hair: Debatable*. The disc features all 27 songs Goren performed at his farewell show, including "Lord It's Hard To Be Happy When You're Not) Using The Metric System," "If You Own The Washington Redskins You're A Cock," "Hats Off To Halford," and "Punk Rock Academy." The DVD features performances from the show, as well as photos, and candid commentary on the end of his musical career from the one-man band himself. This set is a must have for any Atom & His Package fan, as well as any fan of the Philadelphia music scene. **Matt Neatock**



A WILHELM SCREAM  
Mute Print  
(Nitro)

Name changes are always tricky. Whether it's a band like Iron Maiden or Anthrax not changing their monikers even though they have each been through a few singers—thus rendering them different bands with different sounds from one line-up to the next—or a band like Give Up The Ghost changing from the established title of American Nightmare. There's no easy solution to the problems that might cause a name change, and surely there are complications that arise subsequent to the alteration. Then there are bands like Coheed & Cambria who are doubtlessly taken more seriously now than when they were known as Shabutie. The same goes for A Wilhelm Scream. This MA band, along with their label, the fledgling Nitro Records, have made recent changes that show that both enterprises' fortunes are looking up. Nitro has signed a slew of new, good bands, one of them being A Wilhelm Scream, a band that was once known by the juvenile handle Smakin' Isaiah. This band adeptly mixes Hot Water Music and Thrice in a way that combines intensity, energy, melody, and heart. Hardly derivative, although they definitely borrow from their heroes, A Wilhelm Scream is on the right track indeed. **Ross Siegel**



BAD RELIGION  
The Empire Strikes First  
(Epitaph)

Although many claim that Bad Religion were the most vital and unique force in late-'80's California hardcore, I never saw what all the fuss was about. This isn't to say that I don't enjoy the band's music. In fact, songs like "American Jesus" are amongst the cleverest punk rock tunes of the past ten years. The lyrical content was always a cut above their counterparts, and the music—melodic and driven—defined the period's sound better than any others. With Bad Religion's new disc, even the most apathetic listener becomes a critic—everyone is in some way galvanized by this band. Fans will be delighted to see that anemic, flag-waving punk rock prevails here. It's the same old Bad Religion and it's the same old four chord style, yet fresh new melodies and riffs are presented here. Greg Graffin's witty political commentary is ever-present in songs like "Boot Stomping On A Human Face Forever" and "Let Them Eat War." There is a reason Bad Religion is still putting out albums today, 20 years after their inception, and this album is further proof that the band is still relevant. It sounds great from the first note and once it seeps in, a certain element of nostalgia and reminiscence takes hold. **Frankie Corva**



THE BANNER  
Your Murder Mixtape  
(Blackout!)

Ever get a mixtape of a well-defined genre (in this case, blood-curdling hardcore) that's un-labeled, with no bands scrawled anywhere on the cassette nor any info hastily jotted down on the J-card? After half an hour, all the songs start to meld into one before you even give the tape a chance to flip over in your deck. After a while it's tossed onto the floor mat on the passenger side of your pickup. Yeah, this is that murder mixtape—The Banner sport well-executed performances via competent musicianship (with a CD booklet that's the epitome of a Photoshop massacre), but *Your Murder Mixtape* is as faceless, nameless, and redundant as that unlabeled D-90 that's melting on the floor of your car. **Waleed Rashidi**



THE BLINDING LIGHT  
The Ascension Attempt  
(Deathwish Inc.)

This album crashes and explodes like a cinder block falling from a 17-story building. It's almost enough to disorient



BRAZIL  
reviews their new record  
*A Hostage And The Meaning Of Life*  
(Fearless)

With two years in the making, *A Hostage And The Meaning Of Life* conveys all the sweat, tears, and blood put into its construction. *Hostage* is the first record with the only version of Brazil that matters as opposed to the EP. It is the first Brazil record written with every member contributing, and therefore the most honest record to date. With Alex Newport at the board, we were able to focus and hone our songs to a razor sharp edge, manipulating our six member wall of sound so that at times it can be positively overwhelming, while other times fragile and minimalistic. The songs were written to be as exhilarating to play and experience in a crowded, 1000-person hall, as they are in a tiny musky basement in front of a dozen people. It's hard for every band to classify their own music, unless they wear their influences on their sleeve, so in the interest of sidestepping classification, it can be said the new album draws from everything from new wave to post rock to jazz. Fans of everything from Can, Duran Duran, Radiohead, and Thelonius Monk can probably find something to chew on. **Jonathon Newby (Vocals)**

the senses. When one listens to The Blinding Light—featuring Brian Lovro formerly of the criminally underrated Minnesota hardcore outfit Threadbare—one anticipates the slower, groovier segments in the midst of the chaos, like any eye of the storm. Lovro, who has the disposition of a rabid pitbull, might be one of the few singers in aggressive rock to actually inspire fear in the listener. The desperation and ache behind his vocals is reminiscent of Snapcase's Daryl Tabreski if he were fronting a grindcore band. I'd by no means like to be the victim of lyrical threats like, "Test your placement in front of my iron fist," mostly 'cause I really don't think my placement is all that good, and because Lovro sounds like he isn't messing around. **Frankie Corva**



**BONNIE "PRINCE" BILLY**  
*Greatest Palace Music*  
(Drag City)

You may know Will Oldham as Palace, Palace Songs, or Palace Brothers, but for the last few years he has been recording under this name. The idea behind the lo-fi singer/songwriter's newest recording is simply to take his favorite songs off all of his old albums, pack up the band, and head to Nashville to re-record them. The result, unsurprisingly, is a country-tinged version of familiar songs, complete with pedal steel guitar, fiddle, mandolin, and female duet parts. For several of the songs, the country influence doesn't really add or take away all that much. The overall effect veers south from Oldham's usual Neil Young influence. There are a few songs ("I Send My Love to You" and "Pushkin") that sound downright silly under this treatment, and bring the listener dangerously close to floral-patterned, big-haired 1960's Nashville. As a whole, the project comes off more than a little bit self-indulgent. With that said, there are a couple of achingly beautiful versions of songs that deserve to be classics. Most notable among these is "Gulf Shores," a song about a beach vacation town during the off-season. Logically, the country influence makes no sense here, but somehow it works beautifully and you will want to put this song on repeat. A mixed bag that may appeal to die-hards but probably is not a good introduction to Oldham's music. **Nick Powers**



**BOHREN & DER CLUB OF GORE**  
*Black Earth*  
(Ipecac)

I've never understood the point of the genre known as "intelligent dance music." What exactly is intelligent about music that has no rhythm or melodies? Also, if anyone can actually dance to IDM they must have a keener sense of rhythm than myself. If it isn't James Brown then I've got two left feet. If it's Autechre I'm left on the side of the dance floor wondering when the computer programming department of the local university attained superstar DJ status. Regardless, Bohren & Der Club Of Gore present nine songs on this disc. All the songs clock in at over six minutes but feel like they last for over 30. This stuff is relaxing, if you don't forget it's on. You certainly cannot dance to it. Once again, I'm left scratching my head, with a funny feeling like the good folks at Ipecac get the joke while I'm left nodding off. **Ross Siegel**



**BRIGHT EYES / NEVA DINOVA**  
*One Jug of Wine...*  
(Crank!)

This six-song EP pairs your favorite indie poet laureate with one Neva Dinova, an Omaha band who has been on Crank!'s roster for a couple of years. The potential problem with trading tracks with an established and well-respected artist is that his star can obscure yours and neutralize any benefits hoped for from the increased exposure. That risk is especially great when the banjo you're dueling with has the reputation and quality of Conor Oberst. Bright-eyed Conor's contributions don't disappoint here; his three songs have his trademark incisive lyrics, the build-ups to the full-blown cathartic releases, and have enough quality to refute any claims that they are throw-away tracks. Luckily, Neva Dinova's low-key, relatively simple, twang-influenced melodies are the perfect vessel for lyrics that are personal and poignant enough to ensure this band is Bright Eyes' peer and not their pupil. While Bright Eyes does end up stealing the show with the E Street Band-style "I'll Be Your Friend," both artists benefit from the pairing; the balance is less exhausting than a full album of Bright Eyes' emoting, and Neva Dinova's Jake Bellows' sweet voice more than fills the gaps, allowing this counterpoint to leave the listener anxious to hear more. **Nick Powers**



**BURNTHE8TRACK**  
*The Ocean*  
(Abacus)

This album reminds me of that episode of *The Family Guy* where Peter and his family go to purgatory. While in limbo they make ambiguous comments like, "Yeah, it's alright," and, "Hmmm, I'm impartial," and, "It's not bad, but it's not good." Listening to Burnthe8track makes me feel like the Griffin family in limbo. Their poppy emo sound is nothing that I haven't heard before. Their medium paced four-chord riffs that shift into slower, ambient portions don't create any tremors on my personal Richter scale. They do hail from Canada though, so I must make the inevitable Boys Night Out comparison and state that I do favor Burnthe8track over the former because they are far less whiney. The melodies may not be original or invigorating, but they are tight and well produced. For fans of Rufio or Northstar, I'd recommend a listen. For everyone else that's as bored with this genre as I am, this is just one more reason to believe that Molson Ice is still the only good thing to come out of Canada. **Frankie Corva**



**BYZANTINE**  
*The Fundamental Component*  
(Prosthetic)

Normally when bands get older and change styles they become more likely to try and ruin their music with stuff like drum machines and digital effects. Shockingly, Byzantine has gone the other way and ditched the drum machine that they utilized on their demo for a skin and bones drummer. *The Fundamental Component* is the debut full length of this West Virginia quartet, and it sounds like they're off to a good start. Byzantine plays straight forward American metal that will appeal to scene kids and old guys wearing Slayer T-shirts alike. There are times when vocalist O.J. gets a little too radio metal for my taste, but there are only a few. Personally if I'm in the mood for music like this I'm going to listen to Killswitch



**AVOID ONE THING**

reviews their new record

**Chopstick Bridge**  
(Side One Dummy)

The first thing I notice when I listen to this record is that is nearly twice as long as our first record. Now that's progress! It is also enhanced with an 18 minute long movie about the band that my dad made. "Armbands and Braids" is a song about visiting my wife last summer at her job at Fenway Park. Like the Red Sox, we were so close with that one. Better luck next time. I think it might sound a little too much like Alkaline Trio. "Chopstick Bridge" would be a good sports anthem if it wasn't for all the foul language. Amy wrote and sings "All That You've Heard." When I listen to the record it's nice to have a break from my nagging self consciousness. "A Lot Like This" is one of my favorites. When I wrote the chorus of this song I was imagining Shane McGowan singing it. "About You" was written around the time of the release of our first record. It sounds to me like it belongs on that record. It's a good song but maybe a bit too pop punk. I do like that it reminds me of our first drummer Dave (who passed away). "Gone And Forgotten" was originally written for some friends in another band but we reclaimed it. It would be a good one to play live if we hadn't set the bar so high with the thirty five guitar tracks we laid down on the record. "Fillmore East" is about getting spat on by skinheads at the Metro in Chicago. It has nothing to do with the Fillmore East which was in NYC and closed in late '60's/early '70's. I wonder what Bill Graham would have done if people started spitting on the Jefferson Airplane. Not that we are anything like the Jefferson Airplane. Starship maybe. **Joe Gittleman (Vocals/Bass)**

Engage. My guess is that Byzantine's next record will either be a realization of the potential that I see on *The Fundamental Component* or a radio-friendly piece of nu-metal crap that I won't touch with a 40-foot stick. **Stan Horaczek**



**CALEXICO**  
*Convict Pool EP*  
(Quarterstick)

I don't know what's cooler: the fact that they cover both the Minutemen's "Corona" (yeah, the *Jackass* theme song) and Love's "Alone Again Or" or that this CD came to me with one of those cool wall calendars with a scene from *Don Quixote* that you can only get at certain Mexican bodegas. The latest EP from Calexico, a few originals and covers, further explores the band's spaghetti western leanings. Fans of these guys should not be disappointed. This EP is on par with anything else the band has done. What fascinates me even more than the music though, is the Cartoon Network short "El Kabong Rides Again," which features a score by the band. More bands need to incorporate cartoons into their CDs. **Aaron Lefkove**



**THE CATHETERS**  
*Howling... It Grows And Grows*  
(Sub Pop)

Garage Rock. You know the drill: Begin with a MC5 "Kick Out The Jams" style intro, yell something about wanting some action, and then yell "yeah" or "come on." Initially, The Catheters third full length, *Howling... It Grows And Grows*, seems to fall prey to all of the garage rock clichés, but after a couple of listens the album sounds equal in weight to all of the genre's big names. On the surface, The Catheters are similar to The New Bomb Turks, The Hives, Mudhoney, and The Stooges, but they venture past these influences with chord progressions that are intricate and wirey and song structures that surprise you with jarring change-ups. The closing track, "We Are So Cold," stands out as one of the album's best with its out-of-nowhere ultra-melodic bridge that rides out to a "Magic Bus" style ending—very well done. **Chris Rager**



**CIRCLE TAKES THE SQUARE**  
*As The Roots Undo*  
(Robotic Empire)

I was reading a small blurb about this

band in one of the bigger indie music magazines the other day. It was filled with all kinds of really cliché phrases like "bleeding emotion" and "raw passion." It seems like every time people hear music like Circle Takes The Square or The Blood Brothers they dip into their dictionary full of words that 15 year-old kids use in love notes to their internet girlfriends. This Savannah, GA, trio plays noisy, spastic, indie rock that sounds like it was played on instruments that might have been in tune before they got dropped down four flights of stairs. The lyrics are a little too artsy for me, and the tension between the male/female vocalists gets pretty far out at times, but it's obvious that there is some serious creativity in this trio. As a drummer, I'm just impressed that they can remember what they're supposed to be playing with all of the chaos going on in every song. I have to mention that the layout for this CD is one of the most complicated and extravagant that I've seen. I almost felt bad when I accidentally bent it. My advice: buy this CD and listen to it, but avoid reading about it at all costs. **Stan Horaczek**



**THE CODE / WHATEVER IT TAKES**  
*split CD*  
(A-F)

Split records can be a great idea. When friends tour together and realize it would be fun to cover each other's songs or simply to just release a great record for the world to consume a split can be a wonderful thing. Sometimes though, the split fails to deliver and just seems forced. Such is the case with this split. Both bands can stand on their own two feet as they share a sound akin to Strike Anywhere and Avail, but when placed right after each other, it just sounds like one band. Of course there are differences that set both apart, but to the untrained ear, it makes no difference if it was song two or four on this CD. These bands have the right ideas and the heart, it's just not placed on the same disc. **Ray Harkins**



**CRIME IN STEREO**  
*Explosives And The Will To Use Them*  
(Blackout)

Some discs will trigger a certain memory in your mind whether it be a certain time or place in your life all the way down to an exact life changing moment. I can see the potential for life changing moments to be made with this disc as the soundtrack. From the first instant

a fire is lit under you and forces you to move. Sharing similarities with Kid Dynamite, Kill Your Idols (whom they did a split with previously), and The Movielife, this could be the newest shining hope for this particular style of melodic hardcore that draws equally from east and west coast bands circa 1988. Playing with an intensity reminiscent of basement shows and VFW halls, Crime In Stereo blast their way through 12 tracks of hardcore the way it was meant to be played. They go for the gold and win it with flying colors. **Ray Harkins**



### CROPKNOX

#### Rock And Rot (Punkcore)

Cropknox is a Cali streetpunk band whose name really begins to grow on you. They play a pretty energetic non-crust anarchopunk style. That is to say that these guys aren't really doing the dry impenetrable punk/grind thing, and you can clearly understand their vocals. I'd compare them to another California punk act, Swindle, but sadly, there's not an incredible amount to latch onto here. The guitars are raw and the songs are decently written. They are speedy and with a good burst of emotion, and they surely write some solid, if confusing lyrics (on the government: "They do to us what Hitler did to the Jews"). Chalk these guys up as a lesser Violent Society from the west coast— perhaps there's just another album needed to see where they can go with this. *Rock And Rot* also features a cover of The Underdogs' "East of Dachau" which I can only assume is some late-'70s punk rock obscurity. **du prosperio**



### CROWPATH

#### Old Cuts And Blunt Knives (Robotic Empire)

If it wasn't for Robotic Empire, all of the little boy and girl tech-metal heads would have to work pretty hard to get this record. First you'd have to convert your hard earned American dollars into SEK, and then send it off all the way to the heavy metal wonderland of Sweden. *Old Cuts And Blunt Knives* is a collection of Crowpath's older material. It's all being re-released just a few months before the band's debut full length hits the streets in spring 2004. If you're not familiar with Crowpath's sound, just imagine the Dillinger Escape Plan playing a show inside of a bee's nest. It sounds crazy, but if you listen to it you'll understand. This is the kind of music that never does what you expect it to, unless of course you're from Sweden and you have that heavy metal gene that all Swedes seem to have. If you like fast, thrashy tech metal and vocals that sound like they're coming from a guy who's on fire, then this one is a must have. You might need your calculator for this. **Stan Horaczek**



### DAYS LIKE THESE

#### Charity Burns Green (Lobster)

Lobster scores another hit in the form of six gentlemen who all share an affinity for Further Seems Forever and Sensefield. Days Like These come from nowhere to catch your ear with soothing harmonies, puzzling electronics, and guitars that simply swell into a melody that will not leave your head for days. Granted some of this is trodden ground, but in Days Like These's case they should not get lumped into the rest of the faceless mass

of bands. Major labels take note: this will catch on. **Ray Harkins**



### DEAD KENNEDYS

#### Live At The Deaf Club (Manifesto)

Thankfully, this is not the re-united DKs act that is still touring without Jello Biafra. The ugly lawsuits placed in between the band members has the potential to really make hardcore fans of this immortal and inspiring act rather weary. Apparently this is most of a very well recorded show from March 3, 1979. Parts of it have appeared on a compilation for the club itself, and a few tracks surfaced on *Bedtime For Democracy*. Of special interest to diehards is the unreleased track, "Gaslight," as well as an early "When Ya Get Drafted" which was then titled "Back In Rhodesia" (providing an enjoyably chunky chorus). Yes, this is Jello and the boys at an early point, with Ted playing drums and featuring the second guitar of 6025. It's got all the DK swagger you'd want, with Jello teasing the crowd throughout the 14 tracks. The back cover explains as much as you'd really need to know about this recording and an attempt was made to make this as polished a package as possible. However, the eight-page booklet of brand-new art that the sticker boasts of is basically a poor, pseudo-political rip off of Winston Smith's classic DK imagery. This serves to hammer home the fact that this is clearly not a real DK nor Alternative Tentacles release, but something related to the fallout of the original members. Nevertheless, DK fans probably need to hear the disco version of "Kill The Poor" contained herein. **du prosperio**



### DEAD POETIC

#### New Medicines (Solid State)

I don't think I'm the only one that has noticed the on-coming wave of super slick sounding bands who claim to have roots in the metal and hardcore scene. If you don't know about them, go to the website of any big name hardcore labels and listen to as many MP3's as you can stomach. Can someone please send a letter and explain to me why bands are trying to make their records sound like Linkin Park? Wait! Hold all the letters, I just realized it's because these bands aren't really hardcore bands and I think they aren't even rooted in the hardcore world to begin with! These are indie nu-metal bands. Dead Poetic's singer is not uncapable— he has some good ideas and strong melodies— but he sounds too artifical to be genuine. Like a Sweet & Low version of sugar. This sounds like Jared Leto's rock band, Thirty Seconds To Mars. **Shane Gill**

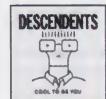


### DECAHEDRON

#### Disconnection Imminent (Lovitt)

Washington, DC's Decahedron features Shelby Cinca and Jason Hamacher from Frodus and Joe Lally from Fugazi— sadly Lally left the group to move to L.A. after this recording. There are so many great things about *Disconnection Imminent*: the lyrics are out-spoken against the corrupt media and homogenized culture, it is self-recorded by Cinca and Hamacher, and mixed by Brian McTernan at Salad Days Studio (for a bit of polish to compliment the DC post-hardcore feel) and while the album mixes elements of Frodus and

Fugazi there are also sounds of '70's rock and jazz that give Decahedron some serious balls. About five of the 11 tracks on *Disconnection Imminent* are beautiful rockers that induce air drumming and sing-alongs, especially to these lyrics from the song "Delete False Culture." "Delete DSCA/delete Clear Channel/delete RIAA." Yeah, that's about right. **Chris Rager**



### DESCENDENTS

#### Cool To Be You (Fat Wreck Chords)

It's almost unfathomable that a band can take an eight year hiatus, yet still return to the fray and improve upon themselves by significant leaps and bounds. The Descendents have accomplished exactly that with their latest studio effort, Simple Plan, Story Of The Year, and Blink-182 might preside over radio airwaves at the moment, but acts like these and the countless others that came before and after them owe much of their flavor to the handiwork of The Descendents. 2004's *Cool To Be You* finds further improvements and advancements on the foursome's fine-tuned pop-punk formula. Some are musically, most particularly in the Bill Stevenson-penned "Maddie," which sports near atonal chord progressions— almost unheard of in pop-punk. Others are lyrically: bassist Karl Alvarez's contributions are the most striking, particularly in the socio-politically-charged "Merican" and the downtrodden alienation of the title-track. Although the song isn't anything necessarily groundbreaking content-wise, it is delivered in an incredibly tactful and intelligent manner. The dorky humor of albums past still finds its way onto *Cool To Be You*. Whether it's centered somewhere in the pungent realm of flatulence ("Blast Off") or getting bullied in high school ("Mass Nerder"), it's that brilliant, meticulously produced crossover of yesterday and the present that have kept sparkling, insta-classic albums like this and bands like The Descendents at the absolute forefront of their field. **Waleed Rashidi**



### DESPISTADO

#### The Emergency Response EP (Jade Tree)

Don't confuse these guys with the similarly named Saddle Creek band that features Conor Oberst. This is not Desaparacidos! Who would have ever expected a band from the Canadian province of Saskatchewan to incorporate the best parts of Fugazi and Hot Water Music

without sacrificing an ounce of originality. The six songs on this CD display the gritty, unorthodox, melodic punk that Jade Tree fans have grown accustomed to. Like the aforementioned bands, two members share vocal duties in this outfit. With the glut of unoriginal music currently flooding the marketplace, this CD manages to hold its own. **The Goon**



### DEVILINSIDE

#### Prelude EP (Abacus)

On the back of the sleeve for my copy of this record there is a bio of Devilinside that starts off, "If you're in a metal/hardcore band and you hail from Minnesota, you have a big strike against you." Cold winters and remote location aside, I would think that the toughest part of being a hardcore band from Minnesota would be trying to sound tough with that friendly *Fargo*-esque accent they have up there. Devilinside play mid-tempo metalcore with new school breakdowns and a somewhat gratuitous use of the word "motherfucker." There is some hardcore credibility on this record as Joel Anderson and Tony Byron from Disembodied make up half of the band, but there is only so far that cred can get you. This is a solid EP, but the sound is being done to death right now. Just about every local scene that I have experienced lately is producing mosh-metal bands at a record pace. Looks like Harvest is keeping the title for best Minnesota hardcore band ever... don't ya' know. **Stan Horaczek**



### THE DISTANCE

#### Your Closest Enemies EP (Bridge Nine)

I don't know how they do it. Bridge Nine never ceases to impress when it comes to the packaging of their CDs. So many people today forget about artwork, only to digitize the songs then toss the packaging in the trash. Others like myself, who remember a distant land where no iPods or WinAmps existed, love cool packaging. This six-song CD by The Distance has great packaging that must have cost a bundle... which is weird. The CD is only eight minutes long. No, not 80... eight. So, if Bridge Nine sells enough of these records to make the high costs worth it, they'll be selling to a lot of kids who don't mind listening to a record that is over before you can make a serving of pasta. This presents obvious problems, like wearing out the ball-bearings on your six-disc CD changer. Other problems are that I would never in a million years pay \$10.98 for eight minutes of music.

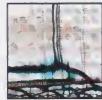


### COMMUNIQUÉ

#### reviews their new record Poison Arrows (Lookout!)

Conceptually, we wanted a record that was compact and dense at the same time. The songs mostly stay under four minutes, but any given song has upwards of 50 tracks of recorded instruments ("Perfect Weapon" has over 70). Most of the extraneous tracks are backing vocals, percussion, and barely-audible keyboard and guitar parts. We tried to hit the full spectrum of sounds on this record. The first track, "The Best Lies," is the shortest song, and the one that best combines the two tendencies of the record, dance and rock— a primer of sorts. "Ouija Me," in addition to having every vowel in its title, is a catchy and melodic song about a very dark subject. The choir at the beginning of "Perfect Weapon" is Ryan singing each note of an E-minor chord on a separate track. To get the Mellotron sound on the verses of "Rattling Bones," we recorded a Wurlitzer into a sampler and played it backwards. On closer examination, our fun, danceable record has quite a number of songs about death, sadness, betrayal, drugs, and other unpleasant subjects. Our sonic model for this record was Phil Spector's wall of sound, and I think at some points we achieved it with the bombastic ending of "Dagger Vision," the cascading harmonies of "Strays," and the Kraftwerk-meets-Television stomp of "Evaporate." **(Communiqué)**

Regardless, this band is good. They sound like early Indecision or even Unbroken. Hopefully their full length will have the good sense to feature 60 songs, thus leveling it out to a good 50 minutes worth of music. **Ross Siegel**



### DIVISION OF LAURA LEE *Das Not Compute* (Epitaph)

Division Of Laura Lee is from Sweden and they have toured with both The Sounds and The Hives, but don't write them off as just another Swedish garage act. They fuse atmospheric rock with '60's psychadelia, new wave, and garage rock without adhering to any of the clichés prescribed to those various styles. If you listen carefully to each song you will be able to pick out traces of Supergrass, The Stooges, Stones Roses, and even a little Joy Division. The highs and lows of the 11 tracks will leave you reflecting over past relationships one minute and throwing beer bottles the next. Even the track sequence here is perfect, as there is a balance between songs dominated by guitar followed by appropriate tunes driven by mellow vocals and keyboards. I don't usually buy into hype on bands, but this time it's worth it. **The Goon**



### END. *The Sounds of Disaster* (Ipecac)

I'm a horrible driver to begin with, and this CD almost caused me to swerve off the road and into a detour sign. This eclectic platter of music plays like a split-open piñata stuffed with lounge music, B-movie samples, distorted horn lines, and random gun shots. Unsurprisingly, Mr. Bungle fans will grow a fat, wet one after listening to this. End's use of surf-rock guitar-riffs and drum and bass breakdowns results in a style that is a culmination of Mr. Bungle's already scatter-brained sound. Add a dash of electronica and we're getting somewhere good. If you have been keeping up with material that's released on Ipecac you will understand where this is coming from. If music has the ability to alter one's state of mind, then this might as well be LSD. **The Goon**



### EVENING *Other Victorians* (Lookout!)

*Other Victorians* is an ambitious debut album from this San Francisco quartet. It is dense with pulsing, modulated keyboards and sweeping, precise guitar work. Vocalist/keyboardist Matt Rist has a voice similar to that of a more subdued Cedric Bixler of the Mars Volta. That almost calls for a "prog" label, but there is enough strength in Evening's arrangements to indicate that they aren't trying to sound intricate or complex. Instead, their songwriting just comes off that way. Rhythmically, *Other Victorians* is reminiscent of *Ok Computer*-era Radiohead as it rocks with restraint that loosens when it needs to but mostly moves to unify the songs' complexities. **Chris Rager**



### EVERGREEN TERRACE *Writer's Block* (Eulogy)

From what I can tell from the last time I saw Florida melodicore band live, their set is almost half comprised of cover

songs. That's all well and good—I like their cover of "Maniac" by Michael Sembello more than I like the original—but if you go to see a band live you really want to see them play their own songs, not screamo versions of songs a screamo band really has no business covering in the first place. Songs like "Zero" by the Smashing Pumpkins, "Mad World" by Tears for Fears, and "Sunday Bloody Sunday," are great songs that are given respectful interpretations here. However, I think a screamo band like Evergreen Terrace, that draws from hardcore, punk, and metal equally, should probably stick to covering hardcore, metal, and punk instead of political Brit-pop. Not bad stuff here, I'll never listen to this again. **Ross Siegel**



### EYVIND KANG *Virginal Co-ordinates* (Ipecac)

Without disappointment, Ipecac continues their tradition of putting out music that no other label has the balls to even think about releasing. Composed by renowned violinist Eyvind Kang, *Virginal Co-ordinates* is a symphonic mish-mash of flute, trumpet, cello, percussion, bassoon, and guitar. At times angelic and eerie, this 72-minute CD could either pose as the score to a David Lynch movie or as a tribute to the late experimental musician and bandleader Sun Ra. To offset some of the boredom of the chamber music, Mike Patton contributes his signature of long, soothing vocal melodies, which bring a sexy quality to the album. This is as close as I will ever get to being aroused by listening to the New York Philharmonic. **The Goon**



### FAUN FABLES *Family Album* (Drag City)

This duo may very well have bridged the gap between pop music and musical theater with their latest full length *Family Album*. Equal parts winsome, haunting, and powerfully emotive, Dawn McCarthy is a songwriter of rare talent, who weaves stories of obsession ("Still Here"), burgeoning womanhood ("Preview"), and death ("Rising Din") with a remarkable voice that rivals that of one-time controversy-magnet, Sinéad O'Connor. Utilizing an assortment of instruments not usually associated with pop music, like flute, cello, and vibraphone, the number of moods and genres this duo encompasses is equally impressive. Supposedly, McCarthy has a play in production out on the west coast that incorporates more of her music that has received nothing less than rave reviews. **Dean Ramos**



### FINAL WORD *Fools Like You* (Indecision)

Respect is something that does not come naturally seeing as it has to be built from the ground up. Indecision Records has earned my respect by releasing quality hardcore records over the years that each have their own personal touch. This one kind of throws me for a loop. Final Word features ex-members of the popular Canadian hardcore band A Death For Every Sin. They do not stray far from the path that they had previously forged with their Hatebreed-tinged metalcore. I would be compelled to say that this is one step below what A Death For Every Sin did, as it relies more on clichés than

## SELF REVU



### LOLA RAY

reviews their new record

### *I Don't Know You* (DC Flag)

Twelve men, one outfit, three words "sex, sex, sex." From the band that has brought you nothing in the past, comes forth the new album, *I Don't Know You*. Never before have so many words been recorded onto one single CD. From the moment you put the album into your car stereo, to the five minutes later when you pull out of your girlfriend, it's non-stop influences ranging all the way from artists like Ray Davies, Sugar Ray, Raye Against The Machine, Ray Serrada, Ray Anestasio, Everybody Loves Raymond, Ray Liotta, all the way to Danzig and Stereo Cell. With every note sung on this album, it is clear that lead singer John Balcanta listens to music, especially in the song "Automatic Girl" where he repeats the lyrics "automatic girl" over 37 times. You can tell that the cat definitely does not have his proverbial tongue. But don't be confused by this band's Asian front man, all of the words are in English. The song "What It Feels" brings to mind a Strokes inspired visual, except with members of Lola Ray in place of the members of The Strokes, and the music of Lola Ray in place of the music of The Strokes. There's definitely the same smell, dirty garage rock, only cleaner and less rocky. That's right, this is dangerous rock and roll the safe way. If you're into a faux-punk lifestyle or if you're just plain broke, or you need a frisbee, you should definitely check out this incredible new album by Lola Ray. These guys are so ahead of their time, they released the number one summer jam in the spring. **(Lola Ray)**

their previous band ever did. Overall it is a simple hardcore record with very few surprises. The only real complaint I can muster is for the awful artwork that looks like it could be a joke. Words really can't describe it. For those looking for a quick shot to the arm of simplistic, forceful hardcore, your match is made. **Ray Harkins**



### THE FREQUENCY

*self-titled*  
(Noreaster Failed Industries)

At first listen this record appeared to be cock-rock along the lines of AC/DC or The Darkness. The first song, "You're The Perfect Size," has that cocky rock swagger that almost every new band has now—picture the kind of music a 6'6" skinny British dude with long hair would play in a room with a bunch of drunk girls. The mood oscillates into song two, "Stop It," which is a synth driven dance tune, while the rest of the record follows suit. One rocker, one chilled-out synth jam, then maybe an '80's style pop song thrown in for good measure. Noting that this is a side-project of members of Trans Am helps one understand the record. If you like Trans Am, then this band has something for you. In my opinion, they seem like they are trying to do everything for commercial viability. They should stick to their guns and groove out with the classic 808 and 909 drum machines and put their jimmies back in their jeans. **Cyrus Shahmir**



### FRIENDS OF DEAN MARTINEZ

*Random Harvest*  
(Narnack)

Many critics have been quick to point out how Friends Of Dean Martinez's southwestern roots are glaringly obvious. Hopefully their good fortune will lead David Lynch to invite them to score one of his films. Every single track on this album brings to mind ominous images of running down blind alleys only to find yourself trapped. Moody, creepy, and even a little gothic, the title track almost seems ripped right out of a horror movie and would make the perfect background music during the scenes where the villain attempts to seduce the helpless teen damsel. More subtly romantic tracks such as these are offset by the alien feel of "Why Does My Heart..." Perhaps the darkest of all is "Dusk," which evokes the feeling of someone letting themselves peacefully get swallowed up by quicksand. Despite the fact that these boys seem

bound and determined to make a go of it as touring musicians, if all else fails, their future scoring films or television shows would be bright. Their music, however, is the polar opposite. **Dean Ramos**



### GIVE UP THE GHOST

*Year One*  
(Bridge Nine)

Give Up The Ghost's *Year One* was originally released a few years ago when the band was called American Nightmare. After being sued by another band of the same name they were forced to re-release their old records under the name Give Up The Ghost. As far as I'm concerned, this record could come out under any name and still be one of the greatest hardcore records ever. *Year One* deserves a space alongside *The Age of Quarrel*, *Rock For Light*, *Break Down The Walls*, and *Damaged*. Much like those records, *Year One* came out without expectation and was a breath of fresh air in a moment of uninspired crisis within the hardcore scene and ten years from now it will seem like an obvious addition to the aforementioned list. It is both explosive and anthemic, while lyrically ignoring all the tired themes of hardcore's past. Instead of delving into suburban clichés or flexing an ignorant masculinity, vocalist Wes Eishold turns toward introspection, self loathing, and hopelessness. If your self conscious, confused, angry, or between the ages of 15 to 30 go buy *Year One*. Chances are it will change your life. **Shane Gill**



### THE GOOD LIFE

*Lovers Need Lawyers* EP  
(Saddle Creek)

The Good Life is described by leader Tim Kasher as an escape from his other musical projects, specifically the band Cursive. On *Lovers Need Lawyers*, Kasher abandons the sonic assault, stop-start enthusiasm, and sheer volume of Cursive to concentrate on verse-chorus-verse pop gems. Musically, the EP is a substantial effort, but the power of the songs lie in their lyrics. As punk rock's poet laureate, Kasher has a way of explaining to the world what it's like living to the left of society's comfortable center. Romantic disorder, missing home, and dodging the major label vampires are a few of the issues he tackles with The Good Life, and they come equipped with some chilling melodies. *Lovers Need Lawyers* is a solid statement with five solid songs. **Stephen Blackwell**



**HARKONEN**  
*Dancing EP*  
(Initial)

It's tough to take this album seriously. For starters, the back of case doesn't have a track listing printed on it. It simply has four words in its place that read, "Throw Beer At Us." The music is an obnoxious roaring of nonsensical lyrics and repetitive riffs that sound like they are toppling over one another, like the bastard child of Botch and AC/DC. Skipping ahead to track four, "I'm Taking The Hydroplane To Bellingham," with the entirety of its lyrics being, "You'll get there in time. You'll never touch the ground," I began to curse any and everyone involved in the creation and distribution of this disc. For fans of irrationality and dissonance, this one's for you! **Frankie Corva**



**HASTE THE DAY**  
*Burning Bridges*  
(Solid State)

Based on this album's cover art—a crying angel surrounded by flames—Haste The Day might as well be Saves The Day's evil cousin. After giving *Burning Bridges* a listen, I quickly removed any images of Chris Conley with devil horns and a pitchfork from my mind. Following in the footsteps of bands such as Atreyu and Avenged Sevenfold, Haste The Day delivers a 12-track powerhouse that should satisfy fans of a majority of the heavier genres, while sprinkling in a touch of melody here and there for those who like a little sensitivity with their metal. On your next trip to the music store, put this one near the top of your list. **Matt Neatock**



**HINT HINT**  
*Young Days*  
(Suicide Squeeze)

If this were 2001, the members of Seattle's Hint Hint would likely get their 15 minutes of fame along with likeminded acts such as The Faint and Le Tigre. However, after hearing their first full length I doubt they'll make it much further into the future. Nonetheless, *Young Days* sounds promising at first. "Natural Collegiate" gives the fast paced feel of what Seattle grunge music was years ago, meshed with modern sensitivity. The album drags on as it continues, making it a chore to listen to. All of the high-tech electronic gadgets seem to get lost in the boring vocals and drowned out guitar parts. Hint Hint will definitely be overshadowed by hipster electronic groups such as The Faint. **Matt Neatock**



**THE HURT PROCESS**  
*Drive By Monologue*  
(Victory)

I was never much a fan of Thursday. I own a copy of *Full Collapse* and I think it's just OK. Seems after Thursday departed for greener pastures Victory needed to find a band or three to fill the void left in their roster. They didn't have to look long or hard. There are more than a few bands that have co-opted the Thursday sound to a T. The Hurt Process is one of those bands. From the guitar sound to the whine in the vocals to the cover art, nothing here is presented in a fresh or original way. These guys are to the emocore genre what Ratt were to heavy metal. **Aaron Lefkove**



**IMMORTAL SOULS**  
*Ice Upon The Night*  
(Facedown)

The In Flames/Gothenburg sound and style has been so brutally raped as of late, I feel a sequel to the great Seattle thrash act, The Accused is in order. Yes, Immortal Souls couldn't be any more derivative of In Flames, but hey, at least these guys are proper metalheads from Finland, as opposed to pimply hardcore bandwagon-hoppers from the States with more mascara than musicianship. To The Souls' credit, they play sincere metal rather than metallic hardcore desperately posing as metal. Though they have heart, their music is quite a few notches below the bands from which they obviously draw inspiration. They certainly have a strong handle on the genre's necessary components, and often boast moments that are even comparable to the best of the best in the genre. Still, there is an air of youthful mediocrity in this release. Fans of the Gothenburg sound—especially those gobbling up half-assed metalcore renditions of it—should look into Immortal Souls' *Ice Upon The Night*. With some tweaking here and there, Immortal Souls could very well be leading the pack two or three releases from now. **Evan Fields**



**IN FLAMES**  
*Turn of the Screw*  
(Nuclear Blast)

Some may find it strange that a magazine that mostly caters to punk and indie rock would cover something on Nuclear Blast, a label that brings to mind Meshuggah or S.O.D. instead of the finest skateboard-ready music Southern California has to offer. In Flames, however, fall smack-dab within our coverage range. Consider the fact that half the bands that participate in our Kill Your Radio section list *Lunar Strain*, or kindred spirits At The Gates' *Slaughter Of The Soul*, to be seminal hard rock recordings. In Flames blends rock crunch, operatic melodrama, and heavy metal hit-you-like-a-ton-of-bricks intensity so well that it's no wonder half the Trustkill and Ferret rosters are virtual carbon copies of the Swedish metal scene surrounding this band and their acolytes. *Soundtrack To Your Escape* is polished, powerful, melodic, and driving. **Ross Siegel**



**INSTED**  
*Proud Youth: 1986-1991*  
(Indecision)

I've always thought that Insted was one of the most underrated bands of the whole straightedge hardcore thing that went on in the late '80s. This discography contains more than 40 of the catchiest and most sincere pieces of hardcore history I know of. The list of bands they played with includes Judge, Cro-Mags, and Gorilla Biscuits. It was Pat Dubar and Pat Longrie of Uniform Choice who originally signed this Southern California quartet to their label, Wishingwell Records. With credentials like that, one can easily overlook the fact that they signed to Epitaph before eventually disbanding. Seeing as I was only nine when this band broke up I never got the chance to see them live, but rumors of a reunion have been floating around internet message boards for months. If you like old school, straightedge, fast hardcore then this is an absolute must have for your library. It'll make you pine for the days of bands

with short names and size XL basketball jerseys. **xStaxHoraczekx**



**JEFFIE GENETIC AND HIS CLONES**  
*Need A Wave*  
(Dirtnap)

Ever heard of the New Town Animals? If you haven't, they are a bunch of Canadian punks on the new wave trip, and their guitarist, Jeffie Genetic, decided to recruit some of his own clones (he played all the instruments on the album), and make a solo record. Jeffie Genetic (a.k.a. Jeffie Pop) forgets punk and sticks to nothing but new wave, with a keyboard-heavy collection of songs that sound like Josie Cotton outtakes sung by Steve E. Nix of The Briefs. If you're looking for true substance and meaning you won't find it here, but goofy fun is provided in spades. After repeated listens at half awareness it might begin to resemble a mildly annoying '80s movie soundtrack; which for some may not necessarily be a bad thing. Then again, after hearing it too much, some of these songs begin to rival the Buggles' "Video Killed the Radio Star" in catchiness. **The Turk**



**JESSE SYKES AND THE SWEET HEREAFTER**  
*Oh, My Girl*  
(Barsuk)

The songs on this record remind me of the Arliss Howard film *Big Bad Love*, a movie focused on a character who has more or less every reason to kill himself but does not. It leaves you with an inescapable melancholy, as do the songs on *Oh, My Girl*. Jesse Sykes and her band The Sweet Hereafter bring bittersweet, even-tempo folk rock that fans of Cat Power or Wilco will really enjoy. I am already a sucker for atmospheric guitar work and well placed cello, strings, or viola, but it is the desperation in Ms. Sykes' voice that drew me in. Some of the songs here are so slow they feel like they may actually just stop, but The Sweet Hereafter keeps plucking away through all ten tracks. For the MTV2 generation I would describe this as a difficult but rewarding listen. Keep in mind, when the shaggy-haired pretty boy on your TV screen says something to the effect of "Grow a new heart," it's laughable. Jesse Sykes means it. **Stephen Blackwell**



**THE JUDAS CRADLE**  
*Too Bad They're All Dead*  
(Eulogy)

The Judas Cradle are cookie-cutter metalcore in the grand tradition of a

genre over saturated with cookie-cutter bands. The thrash riffs, the death metal vocals, the grindcore, the hardcore, we've all seen this before, and I for one, am not interested in the re-runs. The lesson to be learned from The Judas Cradle is that you can go through the motions of writing metal and you can re-write all the Slayer riffs and dress the part, but it remains stale and unconvincing unless it possesses some dose of originality. Too bad The Judas Cradle have none. There's nothing wrong with having influences, there is something wrong with hiding behind them. It's a shame that far too often the metal and hardcore scene is filled with derivatives like this. **Shane Gill**



**KILL ME TOMORROW**  
*The Garbageman And The Prostitute*  
(GSL)

On Kill Me Tomorrow's second full length, the trio continue with their unique brand of nois wave, an amalgamation of post-punk, industrial, and new wave. Although comparisons have often been made to goth bands such as Bauhaus and Joy Division, faint traces of modern influences like Nitzer Ebb and Nine Inch Nails can also be heard. What is most interesting is the tribal beats that the band incorporates, along with a pulsating rhythm from guitarist Dan Wise that inspires dance floor debauchery. The vocals possess a great heroin chic quality, and, although not always completely audible, bassist KB Wince adds a certain resonance to a few songs that would otherwise be lacking. This is innovative and experimental. As long as bands like Kill Me Tomorrow continue to push the boundaries of what is considered popular music they will always be relevant. **Dean Ramos**



**LAYMEN TERMS**  
*3 Weeks In EP*  
(Suburban Home)

Brave men, these Laymen Terms. First, they drop a six-minute track ("3 Weeks In") as their EP's opener. As the track's title suggests, it really is quite epic, and, furthermore, largely uninteresting. Next, they execute the sacrilegious task of covering George Harrison's greatest masterpiece, "While My Guitar Gently Weeps." Finally, they actually released said recordings. The only saving grace is the disc's final track, "Perfect World," which is the exact opposite of anything found in the previous three cuts—bombastic, grinding guitars at full-throttle tempos. These are bold moves, recommended only for the boldest of listeners—enter at your own risk and look both ways before crossing.



**FEELING LEFT OUT**  
reviews their new record  
*Once Upon A Time*  
(LLR)

My brother Matt recently opened a studio in his bedroom. This CD is the product of having the luxury of being able to record any time of day. Matt and I worked on the production of this CD for around five months and we had a blast figuring out how to do some of the effects. I wanted to create something that was a little more than just a bunch of songs right after another so I tried to create a feeling of traveling and a presence of time throughout the CD. Whether it's scattered within the lyrics or just something going on in between the songs, I didn't want there to be any dead space. "Breathe," the last track, which lasts over 11 minutes, is actually the song that inspired the idea for the whole CD. It was an attempt at re-creating a drive home that I spent in the van with my girlfriend after a show. The previous Feeling Left Out release was really just a collection of re-recorded older songs so this is really our first proper release in over a year. I've received boatloads of e-mails from people saying that they can relate to the older songs because it sounds as if the lyrics were written specifically for them. These songs are no different in that respect. I am really proud to release these songs. Whether or not you will like it still remains to be seen, but you won't know unless you give it a shot. **Joe Wilson (Vocals/Guitar)**

Waleed Rashidi



### MAKE BELIEVE

self-titled  
(Flameshovel)

The first notes on this record recall a time in when emo was more the butt of a joke than a burgeoning style of music. That was when the Get Up Kids put out their first record, The Promise Ring were pumping out of the speakers of every emo girls' blue Volvo, and Braid was considered as good as it gets. I must confess that the first song by this Chicago band, "We're All Going To Die," really strikes a chord with me. It encapsulates everything that is emotional about music, and, even though this may be a bit one-dimensional, it really grows on you after a while. The rest of the record doesn't have the same effect, unfortunately, as it is remains stagnant. To all of you out there that really like jangled melodies, jerky stops and starts, and the tormented squelches of some guy who might wear a scarf all year round, this is your music. **Cyrus Shahmir**



### THE MATCHES

E. Von Dahl Killed The Locals  
(Epitaph)

The Matches represent all that is sterile and bounded in the state of punk rock today. They make New Found Glory look like a progressive, boundary-breaking rock band. I am positive that I am not the only one who is tired of hearing un-challenging punk rock performed by four cute guys. To be honest, maybe it's just my age showing when I state that I am disappointed in and unfulfilled by lyrics like "This town is so boring when your not scoring." Wait, nah, that's not it; actually, I don't think I can recall any point in my life when I would have appreciated such meaningless drivel. **Frankie Corva**



### MATT POND PA

Emblems  
(Altitude)

This release contains all the hallmarks of your typical chamber pop record—richly textured melodies, layered instrumentation, meticulous production values, and smart songwriting. They start with the basics—good songwriting, acoustic guitar, confessional songwriting—then add flourishes in the forms of strings, piano, and even chimes into one song. Unfortunately, from time to time Matt Pond PA falls into the same trap that befalls other chamber poppers; the music is so ambient and aesthetically pleasing, so meticulously engineered, that it becomes easy to let it fade into the background, like an indie rock version of lounge music. The occasional lack of soul and spontaneity tends to make some tracks blur together, but there are songs that surpass background-music status. Most notable is "Claire," where the band plug in their guitars and rock out for three minutes (and borrow an often-borrowed Smiths' lyric on the way). Mostly, they stick to precious pop. It's hard to criticize this music at all, because it is very well executed. I just wish there was a little more meat to chew on. **Nick Powers**



### MISSION OF BURMA

OnoffON  
(Matador)

For those that are unfamiliar with this Boston band, Mission Of Burma has

shaped and influenced underground culture since their abrupt breakup in 1983. This, their first recording in 22 years, marks their highly-anticipated return as people like Moby cover their tunes (the great, "Revolver"). In short, this record is phenomenal. I stress the term because it is indeed a phenomenon to produce a recording that sounds like *OnoffON* in 2004. Mission of Burma is an unequivocally loud trio distinguished by articulate songs and a pop awareness found only in rock music's upper-echelon of songwriters. *OnoffON* is the sound of a warm, powerful analog recording unscathed by the digital world. This record is all performance, the stuff that can only be made by talented, inspired artists. This record is not to be missed. Mission accomplished. **Stephen Blackwell**



### NEKROMANTIX

Dead Girls Don't Cry  
(Hellcat)

I've always found rockabilly, psychobilly, and any other -billy genre to be stupid. OK you're into zombies. OK you use lots of hair wax. The fashion is wretched and the music is only so-so. In spite of my rather strong feelings, I always thought these guys were kinda cool. They are psychobilly and make no bones about it. The main difference between the Nekromantix and their less than original brothers is that they play with a little bit of wit in their lyrics. Along with The Meteors and Demented Are Go, these guys are about the only other band in the genre I can stomach. If you're a fan of psychobilly you probably love these guys. If you have never heard the style, don't bother. **Aaron Lefkove**



### NAME TAKEN

Hold On  
(Fiddler)

I love Further Seems Forever. The way they manage to create huge, intense choruses that are melodic yet crushing at the same time is truly inspiring. The vocals soar above a rhythm section rife with counterpoint and beautifully crafted chords and progressions. A band like Further Seems Forever takes the singing style of traditional alternative rock bands and combines them with a style of guitar playing that is tight-as-a-drum, moving, and ethereal, like a thunderstorm or a tidal wave. One can either fall asleep to Further Seems Forever or rock out. No matter what, every fan will leave the setting moved to create great music of their own. Subtext: Do you agree with what I've just said about Further Seems Forever? If so, then go check out Name Taken—they're basically the same thing. If you're not a fan of Further, The Movielife, Thursday, or A Static Lullaby then there is no way you'll be into this band. **J. Rogers**



### NOMEANSNO

The People's Choice  
(Ant Acid Audio)

The cover of this CD depicts some graffiti that says, "How fucken old are Nomeansno? Give it up grand dads." Underneath, John Wright, one of the driving forces behind these seminal Canadian punks, retorts, "That's great grand dad to you fucker!" While they're not going to be headlining this year's Warped Tour, it's time someone finally gave these Alternative Tentacles favorites a proper "best of" treatment. Perhaps not as straightforward as their Canadian

## SELF REVU



### 100 DEMONS

reviews their new record

### S/T

(Deathwish Inc.)

Anger. Raw anger. There are no pretty ways about it. There is nothing graceful in its existence. Lyrically this is where I was when this CD was being recorded. To write something about this new 100 Demons I'd have to say it came from a place where not much light was allowed. I can remember putting these songs together and blindly scratching out lyrics that seemed to be pouring out of my mouth. It's personal, but not so personal that it isolates anyone who listens to it. If a person has ever had an urge to just cross the line I think they will be able to understand these words. Musically we think we put together a great blend of old and new. We spent some time fine tuning the songs until we came out with something we all agreed upon. Everyone in the band came out of the studio scratching their heads wondering how we pulled it off. I can honestly say this is one of the only times in my life I can sit back and listen to a recording I have made and enjoy it. Nothing is over the top. It's hard. It's brutal. It has some melody and metal influences. It's tasteful. This is 100 Demons plus more. **Pete Morcey (Vocals)**

brethren in D.O.A. or as accessible as the Dead Kennedys, Nomeansno laid the groundwork for future weirdos like Mr. Bungle with their off-kilter punk. The songs range from countrified twang to almost gothic. Check this out and see what punk was all about before there were all these neat little classifications like emocore, screamo, and indie-pop. **Aaron Lefkove**



### OF MONTREAL

Satanic Panic In The Attic  
(Polyvinyl)

My musical tastes were always a bit too simple for psych-pop, so this album slightly overwhelmed me. As soon as it started, all I could think about were my father's collection of Beach Boys albums, mixed with the mood The Beatles created on *Sgt. Pepper*. These thoughts were soon followed by visions of cherubs circling around a giant heart-shaped box of Valentine's Day candy, and a flying submarine with a giant eyeball bulging from the periscope. While this music still isn't for me, it might be as close as I come to feeling what it was like to live in the '60's. Far out. **Matt Neatock**



### ONELINEDRAWING

The Volunteers  
(Jade Tree)

Lets face it, punk rock singer/songwriters have a shelf life of one year, maybe two. That's a long career considering most punk bands get one good seven-inch and then spend the rest of their life as a band trying to recapture their initial glory. The fact that there are two different generations of punk rock kids who are familiar with Jonah Matranga says a lot about his influence and his abilities as a singer and songwriter. Although his first few records under the Onelinedrawing banner may have been inconsistent by comparison to his earlier work with Far, *The Volunteers* is his most inspired album to date. He is no longer the guy from Far. He is no longer the guy who sang on a Thursday song. Nor is he the guy who sang on a Deftones song. With this album he has reserved a place at the table with the likes of those that came before him; names like Elliot Smith, Nick Drake, Jeff Buckley, and Ryan Adams. Buy this album, go home, put on "Stay" and you'll know in the first 30 seconds why Jonah Matranga is worth cherishing. The liner notes by Geoff Rickley are a nice touch, but you could put this album on a CD-R in a brown paper bag and it would still feel priceless. **Shane Gill**



### PEDRO THE LION

Achilles Heel  
(Jade Tree)

Call me pagan, but in my mind, wariness abounds when a band is known to make religion a focus of their work. To be fair, Pedro The Lion's David Bazan has rarely been preachy, and usually only sings about faith as a topic he struggles with. It turns out my wariness was unwarranted; there's actually less of a religious overtone to this album than previous Pedro The Lion fare. Some people will call this the best of David Bazan's work, but to me it still falls short of work from a lot of similar bands. The lyrics tend to be less mundane and loftier, than on previous albums, and they do mix it up a little more. Letting the music get downright interesting on "Keep Swinging" and "I Do," there's still too much sternness and plodding for most listeners, and it takes too long for this record to really get off the ground. On the whole, this album feels like Pedro The Lion doing Sebadoh's slow tracks, except not as well as Sebadoh. Before you spend \$12 on this, I might recommend John Vanderslice's latest; it's similar but much better. **Nick Powers**



### PEPPER

In With The Old  
(Volcom)

Chances are if you strolled by the Volcom stage during the last few years of the Warped Tour, you would have stumbled across these guys jamming out to their own recipe of white boy reggae. Claiming roots in Hawaii, Pepper has built a reputation around mimicking the sound that Sublime pulled off with better results. This time around Pepper is fortunate enough to work under legendary Bad Brains producer, Ron Saint Germain. His influence is evident in the crunchier guitars, delayed vocals, and a balance between reggae and rock that leaves them with a sound that resembles Zebrahead. That is never a good thing. I've always been a fan of Saint Germain's work on the Bad Brains' classic album *Quickness*, but it will take more than a passing admiration for me to be able to stomach this. **The Goon**



### PIG DESTROYER

Painter Of Dead Girls  
(Robotic Empire)

I must confess, I like the name Pig Destroyer for no other reason than it makes no bones about what the band is, where they're coming from, and how messily they plan on destroying their listeners' vital organs— and of course

any unfortunate pig that may be nearby. Fast, thrashy, a touch of doom, and sloppy as all hell—that's what I would expect from a destroyer of pigs. What else could you expect? Certainly not a Stooges and Helmet cover. Well, you get that too, tongue firmly in cheek thankfully (more so with The Stooges cover). This being my introduction to the squeals of Pig Destroyer, I can't say how *Painter Of Dead Girls* compares to their earlier efforts. However, I can attest that farmers, and those with swine as pets keep the two healthily apart from each other. **Evan Fields**



### PIEBALD

*All Ears, All Eyes, All The Time*  
(Side One Dummy)

Like that infected, gaping wound on your elbow that you find yourself constantly scratching, Piebald will ceaselessly persist, churning out their sometimes-emo, usually-pop-punk fare as they've done with moderate success over the past several years. Travis Shettel's vocals are an acquired taste, which to some is the liquid equivalent of equal parts Jim Beam Black, ipecac syrup, and armadillo piss. Despite such moments that are seemingly working against them, there's just one fact: Piebald's new album is truly worth the 15-track listen. Point blank, *All Ears, All Eyes, All The Time* delivers on all accounts. The arrangements are downright stellar, the musicianship is wholly on-point, and the songwriting is full of head-in-the-clouds pop hooks "The Jealous Guy Blues" is three minutes of pure, blaring guitar pop fun while "Get Old Or Die Trying" swipes the melody card with no credit limit. Shettel's trademark unsettling vocals can mask the meat and potatoes of Piebald, but they quickly manifest themselves as part of the band's persona (particularly when presented via the narrative lyrics) and gel within the song upon a second, third, or fourth listen. So, love 'em or hate 'em, Shettel's idiosyncratic pipes and his band's powerful pop tuneage offers yet another reason to revel in picking at your scabs because chances are, they're not going away anytime soon. **Waleed Rashidi**



### THE PLOT TO BLOW UP THE EIFFEL TOWER

*If You Cut Us We Bleed*  
(Happy Couples Never Last)

Remember back when punk was spastic and artistic? Once upon a time, bands were made up of musicians (for lack of a better term) who were completely destructive and hopped up on amphetamines. The end result was 200 different styles of punk rock all over the nation, all of which made you want to rip your hair out. If that's what punk inspired in the early days, then this is punk at its finest. This album continues in the vein of bands like Flipper and X with its razor thin guitars, punchy timing, and catchy choruses. Sometimes a song can bring an image to mind. When I listen to this record I get the image of punks hopped up on coke and pogging off the walls and each other frantically. If you like that image, or if that's you, then go buy this album at once! **Shane Gill**



### POLYSCIS

*Neu*  
(Asian Man)

The best way to describe Polysics is "spazz out." There are enough tweaked out synthesizer bleeps and bleeps over

pounded drums and jangled guitars to keep any caffeine-fueled Japanese teenager jumping around their room late into the night. Polysics fit right into the grand tradition of Japanese bands like The Boredoms or Melt Banana. Sometimes that's enough in its own right to peak someone's interest, but in the case of *Neu* the fact that Polysics are Japanese and their music rocks is a combination that will drive all you Japanese synth enthusiasts straight to the record store for your next dose of freaky-deaky Japanese shit. Expect lots of synth, lots of staccato rhythms, and lots of screaming. **Cyrus Shahmir**



### THE PONY'S

*Laced With Romance*  
(In The Red)

The Ponys are playing some flange-heavy, bright and edgy rock with a guitar sound all the way up front. I can only describe the vocals as being slightly understated and having a British, new wavey, Adam Ant frailty to it. There is certainly something slightly art-rock going on here, with a moderate amount of effects and pedal work added to the jangly power-pop sound. The Ponys play music somewhat like The Cars only harder and punchier with considerably more texture, although that really doesn't give their noisy updated '80s alternative sound enough credit. Nevertheless, *Laced With Romance* is not an entirely poor description of this style of music, which has a shoegazer quality at times and a very '70s CBGB punk style (think Television/Voidoids) at others. **du prospicio**



### PRESTON SCHOOL OF INDUSTRY

*Monsoon*  
(Matador)

*Monsoon* is the second release from Spiral Stairs' (the other guy from Pavement) current band. The unfortunate fact for Spiral Stairs (aka Scott Kannberg) is that everything he ever does will be held up for comparison to Pavement and fellow alum-gone-solo Stephen Malkmus. Quite frankly, Preston School Of Industry's work (largely upbeat jangle-pop) over the course of two albums is less interesting than Malkmus'. Several of the instrumental interludes recall Pavement (*Brighten The Corners*-era maybe?), much more so than anything else either has released so far. *Monsoon* retains much of the feel that made Kannberg's former band so popular in the early to mid-'90s. The witty one-liners, along with the three videos included on the enhanced CD, show that Kannberg doesn't really feel the need to get away from letting inside jokes continue to define his music. Strangely enough, there are moments on this disc that evoke yet another band from the extended Pavement family, The Silver Jews. All in all, Kannberg seems content to stick to three-and-a-half minute, straight-forward pop-rock, and do it well enough, rather than pushing new ground. Somewhere, I'm sure some aging Pavement fans find some comfort in that. **Nick Powers**



### PULLEY

*Matters*  
(Epitaph)

There really isn't much I can say about Pulley's latest effort other than that I would like Epitaph to reimburse me for the 33 minutes it took me to listen to it. During that time, I could have run four miles, washed the pile of dishes piling up in my sink, or at least listened to a good CD. Simple chords, speedy drums, and

bland vocals make this band sound just like every other act the good folks on the Warped Tour have been telling you to like for close to a decade. I'm going to save you the time and money, and simply tell you that when you pass this in the "P" section at the record store, move on to the "Q's." You'd be better off listening to Queensryche. **Matt Neatock**



### RAG MEN

*self-titled*  
(Eulogy)

This New York hardcore all-star group proudly features current and former members of Hatebreed, Madball, Skarhead, Earth Crisis, and Merauder. After listening to ten seconds worth of music, the band's former endeavors are all too obvious. One can question aloud if the world really needs another Madball rip-off hardcore band criss-crossing the same touring networks as other Madball rip-offs like Blood For Blood and God Forbid. Apparently, this band's members—especially the ones formerly of Skarhead and Earth Crisis, two bands that ended on unceremonious notes—felt there is a place for the genre on the shelves of Hot Topic. My favorite part of this disc, however, would have to be the thanks list of Jorge Rosado (originally of Merauder) who pays homage to "the problems in my life for making me strong, both physically and mentally. Without them I wouldn't have anything real to share with the people I care for the most... my fans." I could sit here and discuss how silly and stupid that claim is. Or I could cease insulting your intelligence, unlike the Rag Men. **Ross Siegel**



### THE REPUTATION

*To Force A Fate*  
(Lookout!)

Making the jump from Initial to Lookout, The Reputation have outdone themselves in creating a fun and safe indie pop record for all ages. For those not familiar, The Reputation features members of criminally underrated Sarge, a band that regularly toured with Braid. Crafting mid-'90s indie rock a la Jejune and No Knife, but adding their own sugary sweet vocal inflections, makes this an easy record to digest. It seems as though they have nothing to hide and are finally content with their abilities as musicians. All in all a great full length that will have fans of Built To Spill and Pretty Girls Make Graves ranting and raving. **Ray Harkins**



### SHOCKWAVE

*The Ultimate Doom*  
(Triple Crown)

Balls out hardcore brought to you by guys with concealed identities. The opening track is called "Introduction To Oblivion" which, like the rest of the record, samples dialogue from the *Transformers* movie. While the members of Erie, PA's finest hardcore mourn the death of Optimus Prime, I could have reviewed this record without listening to it. I did anyway. Shockwave play exactly what you would expect from guys who cover their faces with bandanas, wear wife-beaters, and somewhere deep inside actually mean it! Double-kick drums, detuned guitars, and not an ounce of melody lace the tracks on *The Ultimate Doom*. Let's not forget about the "beatdown" parts. They're found in every song, sometimes twice which makes for a lot of bloody nosed moshers. This record is silly; I'd imagine it's entertaining live, though. **Stephen Blackwell**



### SIGUR ROS

*Ba Ba Ti Ki Di Do* EP  
(Geffen)

Sigur Ros is a band that you either love or hate. Detractors will say that they are merely a hack version of My Bloody Valentine while some rabid fans will claim to have had religious epiphanies to their music. Let's not even get started with those who have imbibed hallucinogenic substances at their shows. Regardless of your feelings for the band, you have got to respect the fact that they continuously push the envelope with their music and overall presentation. The three songs on this EP are the musical accompaniment to the collaboration that they and Radiohead did with Merce Cunningham's modern dance troupe. The music is, well, what you'd expect the soundtrack to a modern dance performance to sound like. More broken up then the thick flowing melodies found on their latest album, the music stops and starts randomly. Alone this is not something I'd put on to relax, but accompanied by Cunningham's company I'm sure this would be very entertaining. **Aaron Lefkove**



### SINGLE FRAME

*Weheads Come Running*  
(Volcom)

Getting through this CD was like sitting in algebra class. My experience in mathematics was a long and difficult



### BROKEN SPINDLES

reviews their new record

*Fulfilled/Complete*  
(Saddle-Creek)

This past year I bought a house. It's nothing special; a two bedroom ranch style house built in 1952. It is in a decent neighborhood in mid-town Omaha where kids walk by constantly and where everyone has a tree in the front yard. No one has incredible landscaping, but all the lawns get watered and mowed regularly. Tuesday is the day to take out the trash. Sunday is the day to go to church and grill outside. This is a place where normal actually seems normal. A place where everyone seems content and fulfilled. I wrote and partially recorded all of the songs on the Broken Spindles album *Fulfilled/Complete* here, in my house, in this neighborhood. I think through writing the songs, I was trying to figure out my place in all of this newfound normal adulthood. Topics of death, religion, kids, and even the local news found their way into the lyrics and sounds of the songs, whether it was in a more classical inspired piano piece ("Song No Song," or "Practice, Practice, Preach") or in a more rocking danceable song ("Fall In And Down On," or "Move Away"). I can't say I was able to make any conclusions about any of this, but the question has always been more interesting than the answer to me anyway. *Fulfilled/Complete* was produced with Mike Mogis and has ten tracks with varying amounts of singing, synths, beats, piano, guitar, and strings within them. **Joel Petersen**

journey filled with very few highlights. Most of the time those classes were filled with confusion and brief moments of clarity. This band presents the same puzzling experience that math class presented me. Electronic indie rock would be the best way to describe this odd mixture of At The Drive-In meets Kraftwerk while listening to Minus The Bear. It seems like one man's mission to create his opus. Unfortunately it lacks consistency and the necessary punch to burn this disc into your memory. For now, these 20 songs will remain in my distant memory, much like my first year of algebra. **Ray Harkins**

**STARFLYER 59**  
*I Am The Portuguese Blues*  
(Tooth & Nail)

My previous experience with this band was having to sit through their entire set in anticipation for Focal Point to play right after them at one of the numerous Tooth & Nail festivals in the late '90's. I hated every minute of it. Granted I was concentrating on the fact I was going to see one of my favorite hardcore bands next, so SF59 really did not stand a chance. Now that I give them a critical ear, they do nothing to make me get up and dance, but they do not offend me. They are a rock band that wear their influences on their sleeves. They have traces of everything from The Velvet Underground to Pearl Jam. This is better than many bands playing shoegazer rock today, and it holds up to their past material, but it does nothing for me. Maybe if they tossed in a Focal Point cover I would like this a little more? **Ray Harkins**



**STILL CROSSED**  
*Love And Betrayal*  
(Indecision)

This band is like the U.S. clone of Sweden's Raised Fist. The first time I heard this, I knew I had heard this style of aggressive, metallic old school hardcore before. Not letting up for one moment, except for the acoustic interludes the band place periodically throughout, Still Crossed plow through 13 tracks of old school hardcore. Hearing influences from Carry On all the way down to Shai Hulud, they clearly know their hardcore history and do it well. Everything is in place for this band to make a splash. On first listen this is a pretty good record that gets better the more you listen. Still Crossed also features Rich Thurson, previously of One Nation Under and Terror fame. Time will tell where it takes these boys, but I believe they can turn a few heads in the process. **Ray Harkins**



**SULTANS**  
*Shipwrecked*  
(Swami)

Here's another solid record off this project label from Rocket From The Crypt. In the spirit of older Estrus acts, the Sultans play mid-tempo garage rock that sounds like last call in a rat pack film with a raspy Mike Ness sound alike on vocals. Ample tension is evident here in a '60's garage style, as they make their way tunefully through songs like "I Just Can't Take It," "Please Don't Leave Me On The Highway," and "Walk Of Shame." The '60's surf-influence abounds, most noticeably in the Ventures-style drum fills and the double-guitar sound that lays on a lonely instrumental bedrock. There's no surprise that this band is from California, and it's not at all unusual that this too falls into

the Swami release bin. **du prospicio**



**SYSTEMS OFFICER**  
*self-titled EP*  
(Ace Fu)

Ex-Pinback frontman Armistead Burwell Smith shows new signs of musical life with this five song release. Under the Systems Officer moniker, Smith serves up a satisfying dish of electroclash sensibility mixed with sparse, melodic guitar work reminiscent of early Cure songs. The music is atmospheric, danceable, and, fortunately, lacking in the trash element associated with many of Systems Officer's peers. Simple, upbeat songs with personal lyrics that teeter on almost being pretty are what make this EP standout amidst the current rock backdrop. **Stephen Blackwell**



**THE THERMALS**  
*Fuckin A*  
(Sub Pop)

The Thermals may have actually achieved what many thought was impossible in today's indie rock climate—they created a truly entertaining, radio-friendly pop-punk album devoid of virtually any clichés. Far from sophomore, *Fuckin A* is the kind of album that should appeal to those who are still in the throes of adolescence as well as those more musically mature listeners who can still appreciate a good punk rock tune. If the kids of today don't find the intensity and vitality of The Ramones with heart-on-their-sleeve sincerity and impact of The Smiths, they've been led even further astray than we've been led to believe. From the pulse-pounding beats of Jordan Hudson, their drummer, to the Buzzcocks-like vocals and relentless guitars of Hutch Harris, each track is even more infectious than the last. It's bands like The Thermals that keep genres like pop-punk from becoming little more than footnotes in music history. **Dean Ramos**



**THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS**  
*Indestructible Object EP*  
(Barsuk)

They Might Be Giants' latest EP kicks off with "Am I Awake," a synth-pop tune fueled by sampled drum loops which will probably not get you dancing. The reason this direction worked out so well for a band like Radiohead is because Thom Yorke can do just about anything with his voice. John Linell still sounds like he snorts helium, which worked great with the quirky guitar work of yesteryear, but fails to transcend that style here. "Au Contraire" and "Ant" take nods at the slightly uncomfortable pop music of They Might Be Giants' past, but for some reason they wrapped this up with the Beach Boys' "Caroline, No." They Might Be Giants claim they have been installing and servicing melody since 1982 which makes their band as old as I am and even I know you do not touch *Pet Sounds*. *Indestructible Object* is an incohesive attempt and hopefully they'll fix what's broken before their next full length. **Stephen Blackwell**



**TWISTED ROOTS**  
*Twisted 1981 L.A. Punk*  
(Dionysus)

This band was started by Paul Roessler of The Screamers and Pat Smear of The Germs and later Nirvana. It also features a pre-Black Flag Kira Roessler on bass.

**SELF REVU**



**WASHINGTON SOCIAL CLUB**

reviews their new record

**Catching Looks**  
(Badman)

Washington Social Club *Catching Looks* (Badman)—I've always been into great songs. That's what hooks me. I don't care what the genre is or how the band is perceived artistically, if the songs move me, I'm in. I'll buy your record. I'll come to your show. I'll join your band. That's why I'm in the Washington Social Club. Martin Royle writes great fucking songs. They inspire me to wail on my drums. My band mates are talented, funny people that I enjoy being around. It's that simple. So, I'll spare anyone reading this the typical "Review 101"—compare and contrast bullshit; sounds like, influenced by, falls short of, lives up to. It all means little and explains less. Art forms rooted in emotion are inherently greater than the analysis of those art forms. So what's the point of trying to intellectualize an album or band? Fuck it. Just put the album on, place your brain on pause, listen and react according to your taste. If you're into catchy melodies and two part boy/girl harmonies, driving back-beats, noise solos, fist pumping hooks, explosive bursts of fuzz bass, dynamic musical range, and smart lyrics about drugs, sex, time travel, couch surfing, and the fucked up side of American culture and society, you'll like *Catching Looks* enough to either buy or burn. I don't care which. **Randy Scope** (Drums)



**THE WILDHEARTS**  
*Riff After Riff*  
(Gearhead)

My first and last experience with The Wildhearts involved me purchasing one of their CDs and promptly re-selling it after one listen. Now, ten years later, they're still not doing much to impede my trip to the local used record store. This particular comeback album is prone to gratuitous genre-hopping; The Wildhearts can't decide whether they should sound like an ultra-heavy Motorhead, a bad Cheap Trick, or a sure-to-sell Sugarcult. This indecisiveness plagues every song on *Riff After Riff*. I've always heard The Wildhearts mentioned in the same breath as great bands of yore, such as Hanoi Rocks and Guns N' Roses, but the band playing on this record reminds of neither; they only remind me that few new bands can get away with updating and blending heavy stadium rock with sweet glam. Since Turbonegro took care of that whole scene a few years ago, I'd suggest The Wildhearts and all others find a new bandwagon to follow. **The Turk**



**UPHILL BATTLE**  
*Wreck Of Nerves*  
(Relapse)

Think of all the rip-roaring, artsy-fartsy bands that pretentiously blast their way through neo-thrash and chaotic metal these days. Now, cut all the filler and bullshit and you have Uphill Battle. Uphill Battle rips and roars—thankfully sans the goofy artistic expressionist garbage akin to a myriad of different color paints haphazardly strewn on a canvas before being hailed as brilliant or groundbreaking. Although this isn't for everyone, I believe they are honest in what they play, and that means something these days. Like Mastodon, Uphill Battle is playing abrasive music brutally and truthfully. Not for all, or standard tastes, but still cool. **Even Fields**



**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
*Buddyhead Suicide*  
(Buddyhead)

Didn't The Jerky Boys already run this gag into the ground? *Buddyhead Suicide* is the latest compilation from the website that's everyone's guilty pleasure. For the most part, this comp is a bunch of throwaway B-sides and previously released tracks from Shat, Dillinger Escape Plan, At The Drive-In, The Icarus Line, and a few others. Aside from these filler songs, the wiseasses at Buddyhead include a few crank calls to the bands and labels they love to hate on; The Strokes, The Explosion, Fat Wreck Chords, The Locust, The Ataris. While the first few minutes are mildly entertaining this gag gets old quick and the Buddyhead guys can't pull it off with quite the witty repartee of Crank Yankers or The Jerky Boys. With those records and DVDs readily available, does the world really need this? **Aaron Lefkove**



**YOUR ENEMIES FRIENDS**  
*You Are Being Videotaped*  
(Buddyhead)

Formed from the ashes of The Pressure—a local Southern California-based power-pop act that made moderate waves on their own home turf—Your Enemies Friends has all but expunged the groundwork laid in the previous act for a decisively harder-edge. It's all well and good—*You Are Being Videotaped* is a furious blast of blaring guitars, slamming rock snare, and that all-important fine balance of dissonant screaming and controlled melodic vocals. Reminiscent of a more electronically-injected version of *Pretty Girls Make Graves* (sans female leads) meets a more structured, Prozac-prescribed version of The Pixies, Your Enemies Friends has produced an incredibly cohesive collection of intriguing, desperate cuts that float from the bombastic ("Back Of A Taxi") to the psychedelic ("How To Deconstruct"). *You Are Being Videotaped* is a smashing debut album from a congregation of established talent. Smart, striking, and succinct, it's thoroughly recommended. **Waleed Rashidi**

# HOME TOWN HEROES

WORDS Raya Duenas

Started five years ago on an impulse with high hopes and minimal business experience, the West L.A. based Cinefile has been called "the *High Fidelity* of video stores"—the mecca of obscure and hard to find movies.

I've been a regular customer for nearly a year now, and thanks to them, I've been turned on to some sleeper-classics such as the pre-Eminem rap demo from Dennis "Blazin" Hazen and the infamous *Las Rojas* reel. "What's *Las Rojas*?" you ask. It's a one man acting opus where Rojas performs over 90 characters, scenes from 15-20 screenplays, and my personal favorite, a lesbian seduction scene, culminating in a make-out scene with himself, in a mirror, in drag.

**So when you guys hire people, do they have to come in with their top-ten favorite movies or screen a short to get hired?**

(Hadrian) I would say, like most things in Hollywood, nepotism is rampant. Knowing someone is the best way to get a job here.

**Has anyone ever gotten fired for defending *Titanic* or something like that?**

(H) No, it doesn't get like that. There's heated debates always but no one is ever cut loose for their taste. There's giant differences in everyone's taste so part of the fun is battling over *Titanic* or whatever.

**What are some of the movies that you like that others are not going to like?**

(Phil) Brett likes anything with like an '80s synth score.

(H) I don't know, don't we all like something with an '80s synth score?

**What's your favorite '80s synth score?**

(Bret) Probably *To Live And Die In L.A.*

(H) Which is a great movie.

(B) The thing is that we all have pretty eclectic tastes and there's a lot of overlap. If you look around the store you'll see a kind of wide ranging openness with our selection. There's at least a curiosity about anything. **With all these weird movies, what's the greatest lengths that have been gone to bring some of these movies into the store?**

(H) Going to other countries.

(B) Yeah I spent six months in France last summer and just did a lot of buying.

(H) I think the furthest we went would be Africa, because one clerk went to Ghana and came back with a bunch of Nigerian videotapes.

**What about shady back-alley negotiations? Dudes in trench coats?**

**Chinese pirates?**

(B) That's like walking into a head shop and talking about weed.

(H) Yeah, we have a lot of stuff that doesn't really get out on the floor.

**You don't have to be specific, but what kind of stuff would this be?**

(B) It ranges from documentaries to rough cuts of movies, accidents, just anything we can't have on the floor for whatever reason.

**But not like the Paris Hilton, R. Kelly type stuff?**

(H) Strangely enough we don't have any of that. Even the Tommy Lee thing, I don't think we ever had it.

**Are there any movies that you've never been able to get your hands on?**

(B) Yeah, *The Day The Clown Cried*.

(P) Which no one will ever get.

(B) Which is Jerry Lewis' Holocaust clown comedy movie.

(P) That's definitely a holy grail.

**Being one of your regulars, I gotta ask, what are the other customers like?**

(P) Some are top-notch human beings, others are scum not even fit to scrape off your shoe. They run the gamut, working retail you get slammed with humanity, everything from protozoa-brained Neanderthals to world leaders.

(B) Yeah, that would be the range.

(H) I would go further and say we draw a particular kind of obsessive compulsive, a list keeper. I mean we're a little bit out there ourselves, obviously, so we kind of ask for it. I've met a lot of my favorite people here, but I've also met some of the scariest.

(B) People who are legendary throughout L.A. video stores. We actually meet other clerks and you can say the name, and they will be like, "Ohhh!"

**Who are these people? What are these names?**

(P) Let's talk about Amir.

(H) Amir!

(B) Amir!

(B) I actually had a sign up at one point that read, "What does Amir do?" because we were wondering. It was everything from independently wealthy to shoe salesman. Turns out he worked for the Bureau of Land Management, there was nothing else he could be to have the kind of patience and the passive aggressive quality that he has.

**What are some good Amir stories?**

(B) It's consistent, he comes with a list. He has a notebook of '60's and '70's European actresses, and they're complete filmographies, and he's hitting the video rental circuit, trying to complete some kind of massive thesis.

(H) Yeah it's more his nature, he won't exactly conflict with you. [Another clerk] started referring to customers like him as "worm holes" because when you brush too closely to them, you get sucked in and suddenly half an hour of your life is gone. You come out the other end and you're like "What happened?"

**So, have there ever been any Cinefile creations?**

(B) Not at the moment, no. We're getting to the point now where something's gonna give, either making films, or having a label, or both.

**Any ideas what your first labor of love might be?**

(B) "The Love Machine." That's what it's tentatively titled but it's a love story about a couple that move to the moon and they get involved with a manipulative Masonic love cult.

**Would you guys want to just write this or shoot it, produce it, everything?**

(H) The whole thing.

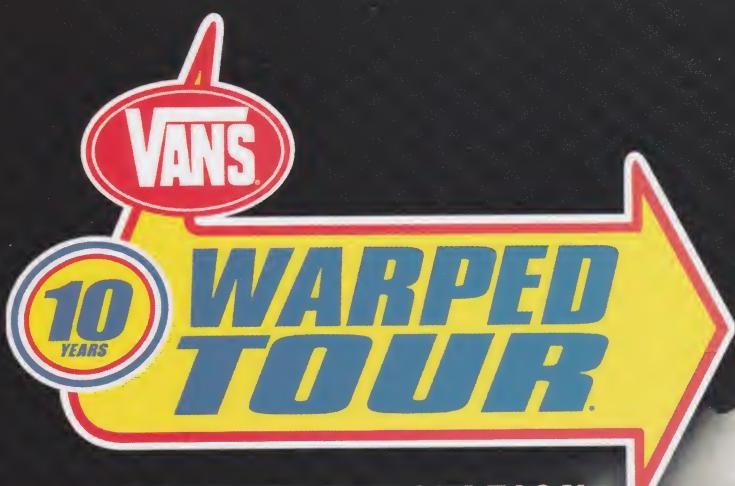
(B) I think if we get into that we'll approach it the same way as the store, just kind of on pure love of cinema and not let things like business plans get too much in our way.

(H) But I have to say, after doing something this hard [as starting the store], anything seems possible. □

PHOTOS Jake Futerick



FROM LEFT TO  
RIGHT: Bret, Phil, &  
Hadrian



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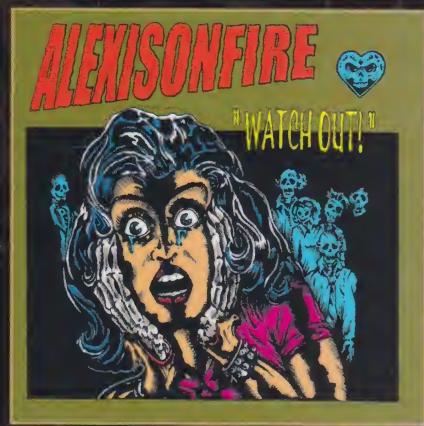
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